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An Examination of ESL Teachers' Treatment of Written Errors.

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An Examination of ESL Teachers' Treatment of Written Errors

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This thesis represents my own work and contains no material which has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at Bond University or any other institutions, except where due acknowledgement is made.

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Abstract

While various studies have investigated the effectiveness of certain types of error treatment methods, there has been little linguistic research conducted to examine how actual language teachers have been dealing with L2 learners' written errors. The current research was designed to investigate the types of written errors ESL teachers corrected and the types of error treatment methods they used to correct those errors in the context of Bond University on the Cold Coast. Moreover, it was intended to highlight the relationship between the literature and actual practice in terms of error treatment of written work.

In this study, sixty-six students' written texts corrected by nine different teachers were collected and examined. The teachers' treatment of the learner errors found in each sample were identified and classified according to their features. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data on the patterns of error treatment were analysed, and following this, various comparisons were made.

The results of the study indicated that despite the current trend of language teaching, error treatment was frequently provided by the teachers in the ESL classrooms. Moreover, the teachers constantly corrected the deviations of local aspects of the language, which did not seriously influence the intelligibility.

In addition, the results of the study also demonstrated that the teachers used both explicit types and implicit types of correction methods in a hybrid manner, and they altered their mode of correction depending on the types of errors. They tended to provide explicit correction for wrong vocabulary and sentence construction errors whereas other surface features, such as grammatical and mechanical errors were generally highlighted with implicit correction, especially with correction codes.

The findings of this study suggest that increasing the use of less-time consuming error treatment methods for rule-governed lexical errors and educating learners to be able to carry out self-correction could reduce the teachers' burden of written error treatment. Moreover, constant information exchange would allow the teachers to revise, refine and change their ways to deal with errors. Until clear effectiveness of certain patterns of error treatment is proven by further studies, these suggestions could be made in order to maximise the benefits of the teachers' treatment of written errors.

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Abbreviations

- ESL: English as a Second Language
- SLA: Second Language Acquisition
- L2: Second Language
- EA: Error Analysis
- ET: Error Treatment
- LE: Learner Errors
- BUELI: Bond University English Language Institute
- GE: General English
- AE: Academic English
- EAP: English for Academic Purposes
- CFC: Cambridge First Certificate preparation
- AWS: Academic Writing Skills
- WWPS: Academic Writing Workshop for Postgraduate Students
- Pre-IM: Pre-intermediate
- IM: Intermediate
- Upper-IM: Upper-intermediate
- AD: Advanced
- EXC: Explicit Correction
- IMC: Implicit Correction

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CHAPTER 1
Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Problem

Since the Audio-Lingual Method was developed in the United States during World War II (Larsen-Freeman, 1986), the stimulus-response method to foreign language teaching wielded its power throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Because of its underlying language classroom principle, “practice makes perfect” (Hendrickson, 1980, p.153), learners were expected to repeat and memorise the correct forms of the target language. The reasoning behind this was to enable the students to use the language fluently and accurately in communicative situations. Language teachers were guided to correct every single error immediately after it occurred in order to avoid fossilisation. Hendrickson notes that the book called ‘*The Teacher’s Manual for German, Level One’* published by Modern Language Material Develop Center in 1961, for example, outlined “teachers should correct all errors immediately, and students should not be neither required nor permitted to discover and correct their own mistakes” (p.154). This approach to error correction was endorsed even in the 1970s, and a similar suggestion was still given in other language textbooks (ibid.). In this way, the pedagogical focus at that time was to prevent errors; hence, error correction was one of the major roles of language teachers.

Such negative attitudes toward errors, however, were dramatically changed due to the Communicative Language Teaching becoming the trend in language teaching (Jensen, 1997). This communicative approach to language teaching was embraced by many

teachers in the 1970s, and it caused a turning away from traditional grammar-based teaching (Bell, 1992). According to Larsen-Freeman (1986), the goal of the communicative approach is to have learners being able to perform various functions of the target language and not to just simply make them memorise the rules of the language. In other words, using the target language fluently in various communicative situations is considered to take priority over using flawless language. Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982, p.138) state that "[p]eople cannot learn language without first systematically committing errors". Also, Edge (1989, p.14) points out that learner errors are "learning steps". Similarly, some researchers such as Bartram and Walton (1991), and Widdowson (1990) affirm that errors are evidence of how much learners achieve their goals in the target language. Therefore, current thinking regarding second language acquisition (henceforward referred as SLA) has recognised that making errors is an inevitable and natural part of the second language learning process (Nunan & Lamb, 1996). At the same time, language teachers have become more tolerant of errors in that their approach towards strict correction is more relaxed. However, when it comes to teaching writing skills, it can be argued that a high rate of teacher correction still exists in many language classrooms (Zamel, 1985).

1.2 Background to the Problem

In second language teaching, teacher feedback has several significant roles. As Chastain (1988, p.361) states that "[w]ithout feedback the student cannot be sure that the learning task has been completed correctly", language learning requires feedback, and it is a major influence on students' learning process. Recent literature suggests that one of the

most important roles of language teachers is making a good classroom atmosphere where the learners can use the target language freely without fear of making mistakes (Hendrickson, 1980; Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Wills, 1996). Therefore, giving positive feedback for the correct utterances is encouraged rather than pointing out learners' mistakes. As far as writing activities are concerned, free writing or journal writing, which is read but not corrected, is recommended (for example, see Dickson 2001; Taniguchi, 1990), so that the learners can express their ideas freely without concerning about themselves their grammar (Raimes, 1983; 1991).

However, from the researcher's previous experience in various settings as a second language learner (henceforth referred as L2 learner) as well as experience from recent observations as a language teacher, it has been discovered that many language teachers still confront their students' errors and make an effort for reducing those errors on a daily basis. The following description entitled '*Portrait of the English Teacher as a Tired Dog*', for example, describes a day of the language teacher.

> It is a November midnight, Johnny Carson has just ended, and throughout the block the last light flick off – all but one that is. A single orange light blooms in the darkness. It is the English teacher, weary-eyed, cramped of leg, hand, and brain, sifting listlessly, but doggedly through piles of themes, circling, marking, grading, commenting, guilt-ridden because the students were promised that the papers would be returned last week. The fifth cup of coffee grows cold and bitter. Just one more paper. And then one more. And then…
>
> (Judy, 1981, extracted from Zamel, 1985, p.79)

One estimate from Sommers' 1982 study shows that language teachers spend at least

twenty to forty minutes writing comments on each student's composition. Similarly, in Hairston's (1986) article titled '*On not being a composition slave'*, he reports that it takes at least thirty minutes or more to write both positive and negative comments on a student's paper. If a teacher chooses to write comments on all students' writing in her/his classes, Judy's description of the language teacher is not too exaggerated. In addition to the above, Applebee's study of writing in secondary schools in 1981 reveals that 80 percent of the language teachers used mechanical errors as the most important criterion when they responded to the learners' writings. Similar results can be seen in Zamel's 1985 study that language teachers primarily focus on accuracy and correctness of the surface features of writing. Moreover, in Fathman and Whalley's study (1990, p.178), they assert that "many teachers maintain a strong interest in correctness in spite of this recent focus on process". To put it simply, the time teachers spend to respond to learners' writings is mainly used to respond to mechanical, and especially, grammatical errors. It seems that there is a huge gap between what is suggested and what is actually done in the language classrooms.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The current research occurs in the context of Bond University on the Gold Coast in Australia. The purpose of the research is to identify and analyse how ESL teachers deal with various types of written errors produced by L2 learners. Following identification and analysis of the types of errors corrected and error treatment methods used, the study will then highlight the relationship between the literature and practice with regard to error treatment of written work.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Over a long period, considerable attention has been paid to the treatment of written errors, and a large amount of the literature has dealt with the issue of error treatment (Ellis, 1994; Robb, Ross & Shortreed, 1986; Storch & Tapper, 2000). According to Perpignan (2003), various aspects of written feedback given by teachers have been examined in a number of different settings. Nevertheless, there is no consensus on whether written errors should be corrected to enhance learners' writing skills in the target language. In fact, benefits of error treatment have not yet been clearly proved. In spite of its significance, the issue of error treatment is often neglected in teacher education (Hendrickson, 1980). Moreover, there is little information available for language teachers to model methods of error treatment (Burt, 1975; Woods, 1989). This therefore means that treatment methods used to deal with learner errors are dependent upon individual teachers' decisions, and thus there is no way for them to know whether their decision-making is right or wrong.

One might claim that correcting learner errors is one of the language teachers' duties and that they should perform their duties as a language teacher regardless of the effectiveness. Without fulfilment of this role, students would complain about not being corrected. It might be true in some respects that it is practically impossible for the teachers to neglect their correction duties. However, if teachers are able to identify criteria to decide what errors they should correct, and if they provide error treatment selectively, not only can they save valuable time, but they can also spend time on other things such as preparing lessons or developing teaching materials. Moreover, this will also create benefits for language learners.

Historically, many researchers have investigated various types of error treatment to verify their benefits. In many cases, though, researchers compared two or more different types of treatment to find out whether particular styles of treatment are more effective than others. There has been little research conducted to examine actual learner errors that language teachers corrected and to analyse the types of treatment methods used to deal with those errors. Indeed it is difficult to have clear standards of error treatment for all types of settings; however, it is possible to examine the validity of the treatment provided in the certain teaching contexts.

This piece of research, therefore, will contribute a new implication to second language acquisition, particularly, to the area of error treatment. It will also provide a great opportunity for language teachers to review and to reconsider effective ways of teacher responses to various writings. Moreover, the researcher herself, as a language teacher, has a great interest in discovering how other language teachers have been dealing with learner errors.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study was designed to investigate methods of error treatment used by the English teachers working within a specific curriculum, but it was not designed to draw universal conclusions. Therefore, ESL teachers teaching Bond University ESL courses were specifically chosen. Learners' writings were randomly collected from the selected teachers, regardless of topic, the length of writing, and the purpose of activities in order to obtain as much authentic data as possible. Due to the limited time available, sample

collection was carried out over a period of two weeks (for more details, see Chapter 3 Methodology and Procedures).

1.6 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, the introduction to the current research has been presented. The subsequent chapter will analyse the body of literature, which is related to the treatment of written errors. This review of the literature will be followed by Methodology and Procedures, Presentation of Results, Interpretation and Discussion, and Conclusion, respectively.

CHAPTER 2
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter, Literature Review, will present the previous studies related to the treatment of written errors in the context of second language teaching. The pertinent literature will be reviewed and analysed with the intention of providing a theoretical foundation to the current study. The review will initially look at the terms used in the area of error treatment studies. By reviewing the literature, ‘error’ as well as ‘error treatment’ from a linguistic perspective will be clarified in order to provide a clear definition of the terms used in this study.

The literature review will then concentrate on the issues of error treatment in second language acquisition. Due to the complexity of the topic and various opinions, the literature review will be presented in three sections on the basis of the fundamental questions principally discussed in the related literature. Following the introduction, the current theoretical assumptions as well as the findings from empirical research on error treatment will be reviewed to discuss whether errors should be corrected. This will be followed by a summary of the literature related to the focuses of error treatment to examine what errors should be corrected, and then, various types of error treatment methods will be analysed to determine how errors should be corrected. The following section will discuss the overall view of written error treatment, and finally, a summary of the chapter will conclude the literature review.

2.2 Definition of Terms

2.2.1 Introduction

SLA research on learner errors and error treatment has a long history. Seemingly, the terms ‘error’ and ‘error treatment’ are widely recognised, and people have a common knowledge of what these terms refer to. However, the terms are semantically ambiguous, and in fact, they have been defined in a variety of ways. As the definitions of terms strongly influence the current study, it is necessary to restrict and clarify what they are at a primary stage. In the following section, the definition of the term ‘error’ will be discussed; then, the term ‘error treatment’ will be determined.

2.2.2 Definition of Error

In general terms, ‘error’ simply refers to ‘mistake’ (COBUILD, 1997). However in linguistic terms, the concept of ‘error’ seems to be more complicated. Although an error can also be defined as a deviation from the norms of the target language (Ellis, 1994), there is doubt as to whether this definition is precise due to the vague use of the word ‘norms’. As far as the English language is concerned, thousands of dialects have been developed in various parts of the world. Therefore, it seems to be fairly difficult to determine which variety of the target language should be used as the norm.

In respect to this point, Ellis (1994) states that the standard written dialect is generally chosen as the norm particularly in language classrooms. Similarly, Fromkin *et al*. (1996) point out that the standard dialect is usually the most widely spread and is used to teach non-native speakers. They further assert that even speakers of different dialects use the standard as the written form because it is “the accepted literary standard” (p.297). In

short, the norms of the target language seem to be defined as the standard written dialect, and if so, ‘error’ refers to a deviation from that standard. However, some researchers argue that deviated learner language should be distinguished depending on the causes of the deviation, which is deeply related to learners’ linguistic competence and performance.

In 1965, the linguist Noam Chomsky stated the difference between linguistic competence and linguistic performance. Ellis (1994, pp.12-13) summarises Chomsky’s distinction that linguistic competence is “the mental representations of linguistic rules that constitute the speaker-hearer's internal grammar” whereas linguistic performance is “the use of this grammar in the comprehension and production of language”. More recently, in addition to Chomsky’s statement, Fromkin *et al*. (1996) assert that linguistic competence – what a learner knows about the language – is different from linguistic performance – how they use this knowledge. In his earlier study, Corder (1967) points out that errors produced by learners can be distinguished either as competence errors or performance errors and that they should be named ‘errors’ and ‘mistakes’ respectively. He defines that an ‘error’ is a deviated learner language that occurs due to the lack of knowledge of the proper rule whereas a ‘mistake’ is a deviated learner language that occurs when learners fail to perform their linguistic competence.

In this technical sense, hence, ‘error’ refers only to a deviation that occurs when language learners have not yet acquired how to use the target language correctly and appropriately. However, even though such a distinction of ‘error’ is considered to be very important, and only the use of competence errors for the research is recommended,

it is difficult to determine an individual learner's linguistic competence of a target language. For this reason, some researchers have created the definition of 'error' without concerning learners' innate knowledge of the target language. Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982, p.139), for instance, refer to 'error' as "any deviation from a selected norm of language performance, no matter what the characteristics or cause of the deviation might be". Hendrickson (1980, p.169) defines 'error' from more of a teacher's perspective whereby he sees 'error' as "an utterance, form, or structure that a particular language teacher deems unacceptable because of its inappropriate use or its absence in real-life discourse". Moreover, Long precisely defines an error as:

> (1) any phonological, morphological, syntactic or lexical deviance in the form of what students say from a standard variety of English which is attributable to the application by the learner of incorrect grammatical rules,
> (2) recognisable misconstrual of or lack of factual information,
> (3) a breach of rules of classroom discourse, and
> (4) a bit of student language behaviour treated as an example of (1), (2) or (3) by the teacher.
>
> (Long, 1977, p. 279)

Similarly, Chaudron's criteria used to identify errors in his study are as follows:

> (1) an objective evaluation of linguistic or content errors according to linguistic norms or evident misconstrual of fact, and
> (2) any additional linguistic or other behaviour that the teachers reacted to negatively or with on indication that improvement of the response was expected.
>
> (Chaudron, 1986, p. 67)

Considering that the purpose of the current research focuses on the treatment of written errors, it is not of primary importance to understand the actual reason behind the errors. Consequently, the definition employed for the purpose of this research considers the term ‘error’ to refer to the observable surface features of learner language (1) that deviated from the Standard English, and/or (2) that are deemed to be inappropriate by a language teacher. With these definitions of the term ‘error’ in mind, the next section will consider the term ‘error treatment’.

2.2.3 Definition of Error Treatment

A great body of literature has dealt with the issue of error treatment and numerous terms have been used in this area. For example, Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) use the term ‘feedback’, whereas Hendrickson (1984) and Hammerly (1991) use ‘error correction’. According to Ellis (1994), the terms, ‘feedback’, ‘repair’ and ‘correction’ are often used to refer to the general area of error treatment. As the semantic restriction of each term is necessary for the current research, the review will briefly discuss some commonly used terms.

Generally, the term ‘feedback’ represents various types of classroom interactions with the most extensive scope (Chaudron, 1988). Dulay *et al*. (1982) term ‘feedback’ as the listener or reader’s responses provided to the learner’s spoken or written production. Likewise, Keh (1990, p.294) defines ‘feedback’ “as input from a reader to a writer with the effect to providing information to writer for revision”. Wajnryb (1992) recognises ‘feedback’ more specifically as the teacher responses given to what learners produce in the classroom. Moreover, Lalande (1982) terms ‘feedback’ as any kinds of procedure

used to inform whether a learner response is correct or wrong. According to Nunan (1991), teacher responses can be distinguished by either negative feedback or positive feedback, and negative feedback is defined by Ayoun (2001, p.226) as "information following an error produced by the language learner". Broadly speaking, error treatment refers to this negative side of teacher feedback given to learner errors.

As mentioned previously, the term 'error correction' has also been used instead of 'error treatment' to refer to teachers' responses to learner errors. Chaudron (1986, p.66) explains that the concept of correction is "any reaction by the teacher which transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of, a students' behaviour or utterance". Moreover, Ellis (1994) asserts that 'correction' is defined as teachers' attempts to provide negative evidence to deal specifically with learners' linguistic errors. In Hendrickson's 1984 article entitled *'The treatment of error in written work'*, he uses the term 'correction' to refer to teacher treatment of errors throughout the study. Similar examples can also be seen in Hammerly (1991) and Plumb *et al*. (1994). Seemingly, these researchers do not make a clear distinction between 'error treatment' and 'error correction'. In other words, these two terms can be treated equally and used interchangeably.

Some researchers, however, distinguish the terms 'treatment' and 'correction' clearly. Allwright and Bailey (1991), for example, consciously avoided the use of the term 'correction' in their study. They state that this is because the word 'correction' implies a permanent 'cure', which is different from impermanent 'treatment'. Allwright and Bailey argue that even if a teacher corrects an error and manages to get a right answer, it

does not mean that the error has permanently been cured. Since the focus of their research was to investigate the immediate effects of teachers' responses on learner performance, the use of the term 'correction' was considered to be inappropriate.

Another example of the narrower concept of 'correction' can be seen in Ziv's study conducted in 1984 that investigated the effect of teacher comments on the students' writings. In Ziv's article, she does not use the term 'treatment'; instead, she introduces her own taxonomy of teacher comments: explicit cues, implicit cues and teacher corrections. The term 'cue' used in her study refers to a hint, a suggestion or an indication of errors written by the teacher to help the learners' self-correction, whereas 'correction' refers to the teachers' actual correction such as the addition, deletion or substitution of words. Therefore, the idea of 'correction' used by Ziv is more restricted, and it is only seen when the teacher provides a right answer to the students.

To sum up, although there are some definitions that make the notion of error correction narrower, the majority of literature does not make a clear distinction between 'error treatment' and 'error correction'. It is considered to be wise to follow the majority of the literature in order to avoid potential confusion. The term 'treatment' can therefore be substituted for 'correction' and will be treated equally without specific bias in this research unless otherwise specified or deemed necessary.

The term 'error treatment' in general has been discussed so far; however henceforward, the focus of the review will be shifted to treatment which deals more specifically with written errors. There are a number of treatment methods that have been introduced by

the literature (see Hendrickson, 1980; Muncie, 2000). First of all, researchers such as Hyland (1990) and Moxley (1989) recommend tape-recording, which is the method whereby teachers record their comments to each learner's written errors on cassette tape, the learners are then able to remember these comments. Secondly, Fregeau (1999), Koshik (2002) and Lewis (2002) introduce an individual conference, whereby the teacher meets learners individually, to assist learners who have difficulties with correcting particular errors. The third type is an error illustration, which is the method in which the teacher uses learners' common errors as instances for class explanations (Harmer, 1991). The final treatment method is the most common type of treatment and involves the teacher directly writing their comments in learners' written texts. According to Ziv (1984), this is one of the most direct methods that affect learners' writing performance, and so, many studies focus on the effectiveness of different types of teachers' written responses to learner errors (Leki, 1990). Since the current study was primarily designed to investigate and analyse written comments, it is necessary to restrict the meaning of the term. Therefore, the term 'error treatment' henceforth will refer exclusively to any types of teachers' comments written in text in order to draw learners' attention to the errors.

In this section, the terms 'error' and 'error treatment' have been reviewed in order to determine definitions pertaining to the current study. The next section will focus on the literature concerned with the error treatment issue in second language teaching.

2.3 Issues of Error Treatment in SLA

2.3.1 Introduction

This section will look at various issues of error treatment in SLA research. In the initial section, how one of the most controversial questions, whether error treatment is effective to enhance L2 learners' target language performance, has been discussed in the recent literature will be reviewed. This discussion will also include a brief historical background of the literature to introduce how the attitudes toward errors and the roles of error treatment have changed in the area of second language teaching since the 1950s, and how the theoretical assumptions as well as empirical evidence support and criticise the effects of error treatment. In the following section, the recommendations made by some researchers will be examined to discuss what types of learner errors should be corrected. This will include several criteria to determine the focuses of error treatment. Finally, various types of error treatment methods that have been suggested for the language teachers will be analysed. This section will also examine the relationship between those methods and other aspects in order to carry out effective error treatment. Taking the recommendations made by the literature into account, the criteria used in this study will then be determined.

2.3.2 Overview of Research on Error Treatment: Whether or Not?

2.3.2.1 Historical Background

With the changing of the trends in second language teaching from traditional methods to the communicative approach, attitudes towards learner errors and the roles of error treatment have evolved dramatically in the last several decades (Bell, 1992; Lee, 1997). During the days of audiolingualism from the 1950s to the 1960s, learners were expected

to memorise correct forms of the language and encouraged to produce error-free utterances. Grammatical accuracy was stressed; thus, errors were corrected immediately after they occurred by the teachers in order to avoid compounding bad habits (Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Mings (1993, p.171) points out that "[e]rrors were to be avoided as if they were sinful". However, through such a mechanistic approach to language learning, learners only learned the language forms; they were neither able to create the utterances nor negotiate meanings by themselves (Major, 1988). Moreover, in many cases, learners easily forgot most of the dialogues soon after they remembered them (Hendrickson, 1980).

In addition to such criticisms, Noam Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar that insists language learning is governed by a learner's innate knowledge to learn language (Ellis, 1994) as well as Krashen's Monitor Theory of second language development also contributed to the demise of audiolingualism. At the same time, in the late 1960s, the communicative approach to language teaching, which aims for learners to be able to communicate effectively, was developed in the United Kingdom (Mings, 1993). Unlike obsessive feedback of audiolingualism, there is little error treatment in this method, because using the language communicatively is considered to be more important than using the language perfectly. Teachers are guided to help learners to enhance their communicative competence not only "the knowledge of grammar rules", but also "sociolinguistic rules of use" and "paralinguistic phenomena such as body language" (Major, 1988, p.82).

However, Major (ibid.) states that the term 'communicative competence' has been

interpreted in various ways, and some teachers exclude grammatical competence from communicative competence. Those who neglect the component of grammatical competence tend to ignore errors completely as long as learners' utterances are comprehensible. As a result of this, learners often produce appropriate but grammatically incorrect sentences. To illustrate this, Lightbown and Spada's 1990 research that examined the effect of corrective feedback in communication-focused classrooms reveals that the students who were rarely corrected on their forms produced less accurate utterances than these who were frequently corrected. In order to be a good communicator, a learner has to have both knowledge of grammar and its appropriate use; therefore, teaching grammatically accurate forms cannot be neglected.

Major (1988) points out that the trends in language teaching tend to go from one extreme to another: teaching grammar rules or not; correcting learner errors or not; and emphasising only forms or only functions. In fact, the attitudes toward error treatment have been swinging back and forth between two extreme positions. In her 1997 study, Lee asserted that direct error treatment was indispensable from the 1950s to the 1960s, but it was condemned due to its harmful effects in the late 1960s. According to Lee (ibid.), need and value of error treatment was more critically perceived in the 1970s and 1980s, and controversy over error treatment still remains unsolved today. It seems that conclusive evidence has not yet been discovered, and the theorists and researchers have approached the issue of error treatment in a variety of ways.

2.3.2.2 Negative Perspectives of Error Treatment

There are many two-sided extreme viewpoints with regard to the effects of error

treatment: effective or ineffective; valid or invalid; and beneficial or harmful. However, despite its controversy and uncertainty, many L2 teachers are afraid of the fossilisation of learners' errors and feel obligated to correct all errors (Kepner, 1991). Moreover, they devote time and energy to error correction as though it is a part of teaching writing skills. Opposing such existing circumstances, Truscott (1996) states a strong thesis against grammar correction in his article entitled '*The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes*'. According to Truscott, grammar correction termed as "correction of grammatical errors for the purpose of improving a student's ability to write accurately" (p.329), is not only ineffective but also harmful; therefore, it is needless in writing classes. It means that language teachers need not correct grammatical errors; thus, grammar correction activities should be desisted from teaching L2 writing skills. Consequently, Truscott's argument impacted on many SLA theorists and practitioners. Ferris (1999, p.2) likens the reaction of veteran teachers to Truscott's argument as though "they'd been punched in the stomach".

In order to justify his statement, Truscott (1996) explains three problems of error treatment related to SLA theory. First of all, in spite of the fact that the processes underlying interlanguage development are fairly complex, and they have not yet been well understood, many people's standard view of error treatment is stereotypical – if a learner's grammatical error is corrected, and the right form is provided, the learner will be able to use the structure properly in the future. However, Truscott argues that this is just intuition about error correction and a false view of language learning. Many other researchers such as Long (1977; 1991) have observed that language learning rarely works in such a simple way. Edge (1989) states that if students could learn so efficiently

from constantly being provided error correction, language teaching would be much easier than it is. Truscott (1996, p.342) maintains that "[t]he acquisition of a grammatical structure is a gradual process, not a sudden discovery as the intuitive view of correction would imply". Therefore, simple information transfer of the correct knowledge from teachers to learners by means of error correction does not work unless the developmental systems of acquisition are clearly understood.

Although Truscott argues strongly against grammar correction, he does admit that further research on this acquisition sequence may discover a better way of grammar correction. However, he does not believe this possibility is high, because the knowledge of language, such as syntax, morphology and lexicon is acquired in a different manner (Schwartz, 1993). Truscott points out that if this is the case, there is no single correction method that works effectively for all types of errors; thus, language teachers who choose to correct errors have to use several different types of methods depending on the types of error. According to Bley-Vroman (1989, cited in Mings, 1993), who also claims the limitation of error treatment, use of negative evidence, such as providing information on grammatical errors is a complicated matter and hardly understood and applied. To sum up, such complexities of an interlanguage development system make error treatment extremely difficult to practice effectively.

The second problem of grammar correction Truscott (1996) mentioned is related to the order of SLA. He argues that language learners acquire grammatical features in a certain order, and problems may arise when instructional sequences are inconsistent with the learning sequences. This is also claimed in the '*teachability hypotheses*' of Pienemann

(1985), which states that there should be a relationship between the teaching sequence and the natural acquisition sequence.

> The teachability hypothesis predicts that instruction can only promote language acquisition if the interlanguage is close to the point when the structure to be taught is acquired in the natural setting.
>
> (Pienemann, 1985, p.37)

According to Pienemann, if teachers point out and correct the errors that the learners are not yet ready to learn, this error correction has little value. Similarly, Clampitt (2001) asserts that no matter how many times a certain grammatical structure is corrected, until the learners are ready to learn and internalise the structure, they will not be able to use it properly on a regular basis. Therefore, teachers have to consider an individual learner's current stage of development in terms of each aspect of grammar. However, Truscott repeats that such developmental sequences have been poorly understood; hence, correcting errors based on natural acquisition order is impossible to practice.

The final problem is that due to the uncertainty of the interlanguage development processes, some types of teaching and/or learning practices may not be consistent with them. It means that some types of teaching and/or learning practices will fail to affect the actual developing system, and as a result of this, learners will only acquire useless knowledge of the language. Truscott (1996, p.345) claims that when learners have apparently acquired good knowledge of the target language, but cannot perform this knowledge, teaching has only produced "*pseudolearning*". Therefore, although the practice of grammar correction provides learners with explicit knowledge of right and wrong forms, if the learners cannot use the knowledge, it is '*pseudolearning'*. In many

cases, the learners are unable to or even unwilling to adopt the knowledge while they are writing. This is because the learners tend to rely on their intuitions and choose only the structures that sound right to them (Truscott, 1996).

In addition to pointing out the theoretical problems highlighted above, Truscott (1996) insists that grammar correction has negative and harmful effects, because it discourages and demotivates learners. Krashen made a similar statement in his earlier study conducted in 1982 (Ellis, 1994). Ellis summarises Krashen's warning as "correction is both useless for acquisition and dangerous in that it may lead to a negative affective response" (p.584). According to Krashen's Monitor Theory (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p.45), "[a]n over emphasis on conscious grammar has the undesirable result of encouraging over-use of the Monitor". If a learner's Monitor is being over-used, they become hesitant and their learning will be excessively slow (Stern, 1992). Truscott (1996) argues that learners neither like to have their mistake pointed out nor do they enjoy sighting the red ink all over their papers. Therefore, correction may lead them to have negative attitudes toward writing. Truscott warns that learners may simplify and shorten their writing in order to avoid being corrected.

In Hillocks' (1986) summary of Steven's 1973 study, he notes that students who received negative comments had more negative attitudes toward writing than those who received positive comments. Semke (1984) asserts that some learners even feel hostility when they receive correction from teachers. Truscott (1996) argues that learners' attitudes toward writing are important and should not be neglected. In fact, Sheppard's 1992 study demonstrated that learners who did not receive correction improved their

grammatical accuracy more than those who did receive correction. Likewise, Semke's 1984 study with 141 university students who received four different types of treatment methods in German classes revealed that the uncorrected learners wrote better than the corrected learners. With this result, Semke (1984, p.195) concludes that "[c]orrections do not increase writing accuracy, writing fluency, or general language proficiency, and they may have a negative effect on student attitudes". To put it simply, correction of leaner errors is not only ineffective but also counterproductive.

In this way, those theorists and researchers' views of error treatment are fairly negative and critical. In fact, several studies, such as Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994), Kepner (1991) and Leki (1990) conclude that error correction has little impact on student writing, and it is generally ineffective (Truscott, 1998). Based on both theoretical and empirical evidence, Truscott (1996) finally argues that both language teachers and learners should not spend time on such ineffective and harmful correction activities. This time can be spent more productively and appropriately on other tasks. Seemingly, Truscott's argument is correct in some respects; however, many theorists and researchers insist that there must be some cases where error treatment is necessary.

2.3.2.3 Positive Perspectives of Error Treatment

Contrary to what some critics have stated, there are many theoretical assumptions and much research evidence that supports the potential benefits of error treatment (Bell, 1992; Lyster *et al*., 1999). For example, Chaudron (1986, p.82) made the following statement.

> Despite the lack of evidence that feedback on linguistic error in classrooms or outside them is consistently effective in stimulating learners' interlanguage progress, the possibility remains that certain learners, especially those with a formal learning style, can derive benefit from error correction.

Similarly, Birdsong (1989, cited in Wen, 1999) has speculated that error treatment is beneficial for adult learners who learn a second language in a formal situation. Hendrickson (1984, p.145) argues that "for those adults, whom Krashen calls '*monitor-users'*, error correction helps to discover the functions and limitations of the grammatical structures and lexical forms of the language they are studying". Many linguists assert that L2 learners should be encouraged to use the target language freely without having their errors corrected, "so that they can test linguistic hypothesis – the way very young children are supposed to acquire their native language" (Hammerly, 1991, p.75). However, Hammerly claims that there is a great difference between cognitively mature learners in second language classrooms and cognitively immature children in nurseries. According to Hammerly, for those adult learners, feedback is useful in order to test linguistic hypotheses effectively. He further asserts that feedback has to be provided systematically and clearly by the teachers, not from peers, and the teachers have to provide opportunities for the learners to test one hypothesis at a time.

In addition to the above, evidence from several classroom studies prove the effectiveness of error treatment. For instance, the results of Carroll and Swain's 1993 study support Schachter's claim that various types of feedback, including explicit and implicit corrections are helpful for L2 learners to acquire abstract linguistic

generalisations. They assert that negative feedback can help the learners “narrow the range of possible hypotheses that can account for the data” (p.358). Chaudron (1988) states that negative feedback is necessary for L2 learners to reject wrong hypotheses from certain sources as well as to preclude particular types of over-generalisations from becoming their interlanguage. Moreover, Nunan and Lamb (1996, p.68) assert that making errors and subsequent teacher corrections “can provide the learners with valuable information in the target language”. In fact, Tomasello and Herron’s (1989) study found that learners who were first allowed to make mistakes and were then corrected improved their target language performance more than learners who were given language rules in advance (for more detail, see Tomasello & Herron, 1989).

Some other studies also reveal the significance of negative feedback for L2 learners. Rutherford in 1987 as well as White in 1989 and 1991 argue that corrective feedback is needed when the learners cannot obtain adequate input for the right forms of the target language as well as the differences between their interlanguage and the target language (cited in Nassaji and Swain, 2000). In a similar way, Glew (1998, p.85) refers to Lyster’s study conducted in 1998 and suggests that “corrective feedback involving the negotiation of form may help second language learners to modify their use of nontarget language forms”. The findings from studies by Cardelle and Corno (1981), Lalande (1982), and Robb *et al*. (1986) suggest that systematic and salient correction on grammatical errors is effective to improve not only the learners’ grammatical accuracy but also their overall writing skills. Cardelle and Corno (1981, p.260) reason that “[s]pecific feedback on errors draws attention to material not adequately learned, allowing the students to focus there and not be distracted by too much re-examination of

work done well".

All in all, there seems to be a general consensus among SLA researchers that error correction is necessary for adult language learners in formal educational settings. In Thompson's earlier study in 1965, she insists that "[t]he student does not improve his skill if his work is not corrected" (cited in Lalande, 1982, p.140). As far as those learners are concerned, it may be true even today. In order to acquire the target language structures effectively, the learners have to know whether what they are doing is right or wrong (Larson, 1985). Therefore, error treatment is indispensable.

The examination of ESL learners' preferences with regard to the importance of the role of error treatment is yet another type of research that needs to be highlighted. Cathcart and Olsen's early study (1976) suggests that the learners want to be corrected, and they expect more teacher correction than they usually receive. Larson (1985, p.33) states that "[p]eople feel motivated to be doing what they are doing, and their attention is whole". Chenoweth *et al*. (1983), who studied ESL learners' reactions to the correction of their errors, asserts that the knowledge of learners' attitudes and preferences is an important factor in understanding the role of error treatment.

Leki's survey of 100 ESL learners' preferences for error correction conducted in 1991 reveals that the learners were mainly concerned about producing perfect writing. Leki notes that "many students had said that perfect grammar, spelling, vocabulary choice and punctuation were important" (p.206). She further states that students believed that good writing in English meant grammatically flawless writing; therefore, they wanted

their teachers to correct every single error. Also, the survey of students' perceptions of EAP writing instruction and cross-curricular writing needs carried out by Leki and Carson (1994) has found that what the students want to learn in their writing class is language skills, especially, grammar and vocabulary. More specifically, Nunan's 1988 study suggests that adult language learners in Australia believe that error correction is very important (cited in Rechards & Lockhart, 1994), because what those learners want to learn is the correct structural rules (Nunan, 1988). According to Chaudron (1988), similar findings have been reported by many studies (for example, see Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1995a; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Oladejo, 1993; Radecki & Swales, 1988). Ferris (1999) asserts that the absence of correction may frustrate and demotivate learners; thus, the practice of error correction is essential to enhance their motivation.

In her earlier study, Ferris (1995a, p.34) mentions that "the amount of time and effort teachers spend in providing written and/or oral feedback to their students suggests that teachers themselves feel that such response is a critical part of their job as writing instructors". It seems that correcting errors is very important for not only the learners but also for many teachers. Bartram and Walton (1991) point out that several problems will arise if teachers do not correct errors: teachers will feel guilty; students, students' parents and school authorities will complain to teachers; teachers will be thought of as lazy, lacking responsibility or being incapable; and student's anxiety will increase (see also Dingwall, 1984). It seems that whether error correction is carried out or not involves not only pedagogical but also administrative repercussions. If this is the case, it may be difficult for teachers to abandon error correction.

Taking all the theoretical and empirical evidence highlighted above into account, on balance, error correction should be continued unless its ineffectiveness and harmfulness have been conclusively proven as suggested by Ferris (1999). However, it should not be forgotten that providing corrective feedback is a fairly time-consuming and exhausting aspect of teacher's work (ibid.). Also, in the study carried out by Raimes in 1979, she warns that "we damage that important reader-writer relationship if we pick out in red all the mistakes we can find" (cited in Taylor, 1981, p.9). According to Moxley (1989), although the teachers try to identify all kinds of errors, learners tend to ignore their error hunting. Seemingly, checking every single error is not a very productive activity for both teachers and learners, and if so, correction can to be done in more efficient ways. In this respect, Hairston (1986) recommends that teachers should set the priorities about learner errors and correct a limited number of errors. In fact, selective correction has been recommended by many researchers as will be shown below.

2.3.3 Types of Learner Errors: What to Correct?

2.3.3.1 Introduction

Much recent literature in favour of error treatment has agreed with the effectiveness of selective correction for written errors. For example, Hammerly (1991) states that if error treatment is provided systematically and selectively, it would be more effective. Also, Celce-Murcia in 1985 asserts that selective correction is one of the most effective teacher strategies (cited in Stern, 1992). The following table illustrates Celce-Murcia's comparison between more effective and less effective teacher correction strategies.

Table 2-1

More Effective and Less Effective Teacher Correction Strategies

More effective	***Less effective***
teacher elicits information from class	teacher lectures, gives rule or explains
teacher elicits peer or self-correction	teacher corrects directly
teacher gives focused, specific cues as to what correction is needed and where	teacher gives indirect, diffuse cues on types and location of correction needed
teacher conducts meaningful practice of problematic form	teacher conducts mechanical drill of problematic form
teacher corrects selectively	teacher corrects everything

(Celce-Murcia, 1985, extracted from Stern, 1992, p.151)

If correction has to be done selectively, it implies that teachers have to decide which errors should be prioritised for correction (Walz, 1982). Burt in 1975 points out that certain types of errors have higher priorities for correction than the others. Similarly, Bartram and Walton (1991) assert that certain types of errors are more important than others. Therefore, it would be necessary for teachers to know the hierarchies of those errors. Although there are a number of different types of criteria available, the most important errors commonly ranked by the researchers and educators are (1) those that are relevant to the pedagogical focus, (2) those that occur frequently, and (3) those that hinder communication (see Allwright, 1975; Cohen, 1975; Hendrickson, 1980; and Walz, 1982). On the basis of these three criteria, the following section will examine what types of learner errors should be treated.

2.3.3.2 Pedagogical Focus

It has been suggested that the seriousness of learner errors and the kind of correction strategy used to deal with those errors depends on the objectives of a lesson (Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Wen, 1999). In Cohen's 1975 article, he asserts that errors related to a specific pedagogic focus are deserving of higher attention than other less important errors (cited in Hendrickson, 1980). Similarly, Walz (1982) maintains that the features of the target language that have been recently taught in a class should be one of the criteria to decide which errors to correct. The reason for this is because the learners might be confused if the teacher does not correct the errors that are relevant to what they have just studied in a class. Hammerly (1991) keenly claims that teachers should correct only errors which learners make with the rule that has been adequately taught in class. According to him, errors that learners make with what they have been taught are basically different from errors they make with what they have not yet been taught. Thus, each type of error requires different responses. Hammerly terms these two dimensions of learner errors as '*distortion*' and '*fault*' respectively and further classifies them into four types based on who contributes to the error. This classification of learner errors is shown in Table 2-2 below (see p.31).

Hammerly (1991) states that *faults* occur whenever the learners attempt the target language structure that is beyond what they have learned and, as a result, fail to perform. He adds that "there is not much point in correcting *faults*, as there is no reason why the students should be able to correctly use structures they haven't studied" (p.90). Seemingly, correcting *faults* may not only force the teachers to waste time but also leave the students unnecessarily confused. In this respect, his perception of correction is very

much similar to Truscott's (1996) previously mentioned argument that error correction has little value unless it is consistent with the developmental sequence of second language acquisition. Since a teacher is unable to correct *faults* effectively, the focus of correction must be on "what is being taught or has been taught" (Hammerly, ibid.). In short, the teacher who chooses the pedagogical focus as the criteria of error correction, has to modify the choice of the order in which to correct errors depending not only on the objectives of a particular lesson but also on what individual learners have learnt in the target language.

Table 2-2

Classification of Learner Errors

	Taught	Not taught
Learner	Distortion	Fault
Teacher	Mismanagement Distortion	Mismanagement Fault

(Extracted from Hammerly, 1991, p.87)

2.3.3.3 Error Frequency

Another criterion, high-frequency errors, has also been suggested for language teachers when they respond to written products (Allwright, 1975, Mings, 1993). Walz (1982) defines frequent errors as meaning those that are frequently committed by individual

students and by many students in a class, and they are normally produced on common features of grammar. Thus, learning the right forms has more value for students than learning the right forms of minor errors. Hendrickson (1980, p.161) claims that the examination to find out the frequently committed errors at various stage of SLA is necessary, because it could provide the information to build "hierarchies of language learning features". In fact, some researchers have found errors that are frequently produced by ESL learners. As an illustration, the following shows the most common errors made by ESL learners introduced by Dulay, *et al*. in 1982.

(1) **Omitting grammatical morphemes**, which are items that do not contribute much to the meaning of sentences, as in *He hit car*.
(2) **Double marking**, a semantic feature (e.g. past tense) when only one marker is required, as in *She didn't went back*.
(3) **Regularizing** rules, as in *womans* for women.
(4) **Using archiforms** – one form in place of several – such as the use of her for both *she* and *her*, as in *I see her yesterday*. *Her dance with my brother*.
(5) **Using two or more forms in random alternation** even though the language requires the use of each only under certain conditions, as in the random use of *he* and *she* regardless of the gender of the person of interest.
(6) **Misordering** items in constructions that require a reversal of word-order rules that had been previously acquired, as in *What you are doing?*, or misplacing items that may be correctly placed in more than one place in the sentence, as in *They are all the time late*.

(Extracted from Dulay *et al*., 1982, pp.138-139)

In Vann *et al*.'s 1984 study that examined university faculty's opinion of ESL errors, they chose the following as common ESL writing errors:

Spelling	Subject-verb
Article	Relative clauses
Comma splice	Tense
Prepositions	It-deletion
Pronoun agreement	Word order

(Vann *et al*., 1984, p.431)

There is also a useful checklist developed by Robinett in 1972, which contains the frequent errors of ESL learners. This checklist consists of 18 areas, and the types of frequent errors in each area are described in detail, so that the teachers can use them to evaluate compositions in a more objective way (for more detail, see Walz, 1982).

Agreement	Format	Sentence
Article / Determiners	Nouns	Spelling
Capitalization	Paraphrase	Verbs
Comparison	Penmanship	Vocabulary
Content	Prepositions	Word division
Double negative	Punctuation	Word order

(Robinett, 1972, extracted from Walz, 1982, p.35)

In addition to the above studies, Ferris and Roberts's (2001) recent article introduces the following five categories that represent the five most frequent errors found by Chaney's analysis of learner errors in 1999.

Table 2-3

Description of Error Categories

Verb errors	All errors in verb tense or form, including relevant subject-verb agreement errors.
Noun ending errors	Plural or possessive ending incorrect, omitted, or unnecessary; includes relevant subject-verb agreement errors.
Article errors	Article or other determiner incorrect, omitted, or unnecessary.
Wrong word	All specific lexical errors in word choice or word form, including preposition and pronoun errors. Spelling errors only included if the (apparent) misspelling resulted in an actual English word.
Sentence structure	Errors in sentence/clause boundaries (run-on, fragments, comma splices), word order, omitted words, or phrases, unnecessary words or phrases, other unidiomatic sentence construction.

(Extracted from Ferris & Roberts, 2001, p.169)

Lalande (1982) suggests that teachers have to make sure that learners become aware of errors that recurrently occur in their writings. Therefore, the knowledge of the types of errors that are the most common and frequently produced will facilitate error correction selectively and systematically.

2.3.3.4 Error Gravity

Many researchers have agreed with the idea that the errors which hinder communication are considered to be the most important to correct. Hammerly (1991) suggests that if teachers are faced with numerous errors, they should only correct those that significantly affect intelligibility and ignore those that do not. With regard to this point,

Burt and Kiparsky's earlier study conducted in 1972 provides the meaningful distinction between '*global*' and '*local*' errors based on the communicative importance of errors (cited in Hammerly, 1991). In their study, *global* errors are termed as errors that seriously obstruct communication and cause native speakers to misunderstand a message. On the other hand, *local* errors are termed as errors that are isolated sentence elements, such as noun and verb inflections that make a structure in a sentence awkward, yet, do not hinder the comprehension of the message (see Croft, 1980; Hammerly, 1991; Hendrickson, 1980; Lewis, 2002; Raimes, 1991; Walz, 1982). Dulay *et al*. introduced the following types of grammatical deviations as *global* errors in their study carried out in 1982.

- Wrong order of major constituents
- Missing, wrong, or misplaced sentence connectors
- Missing cues to signal obligatory exceptions to pervasive syntactic rules
- Regularization of pervasive syntactic rules to exceptions
- Psychological predicate constructions
- Selectional restriction on certain types of verbs in sentential compliments (that-clauses, infinitive and gerunds)

(Extracted from Dulay *et al*., 1982, pp.191-197)

According to Dulay *et al*., in order to communicate with others successfully, learners must learn *global* aspects of grammar. Therefore, *global* errors must receive high priority for correction.

Olsson's 1972 study reveals that semantic errors generally impede communication more

than syntactic errors (cited in Cohen, 1975). Moreover, Politzer's 1978 study of errors made by English speakers of German as well as Delidle's 1982 study of written errors with native speakers of German found that vocabulary errors were considered to be the most serious errors (Chenoweth *et al*., 1983). Interestingly, the findings from the survey carried out by Medgyes and Reves in 1994 show that vocabulary was chosen to be the most frequently perceived difficulty among non-native speakers of English. The possible reason for this is due to a wrong choice of words seriously hindering comprehension and causing miscommunication with other people.

In Hendrickson's earlier study conducted in 1977, he suggested teachers use the following error chart in order to record learners' errors for diagnostic purposes. Hendrickson (1980) asserts that these types of charts are useful not only for developing teaching materials but also deciding a hierarchy of error treatment priorities. He further states that these error charts help teachers to know more about the process of SLA.

Table 2-4

Example of Error Chart

	Lexicon	Syntax	Morphology	Orthography	Total
Global Errors	4			2	6
Local Errors	8	5	8	17	38
Problem Area(s)	Nouns 9	Pre-positions 4	Plural Markers 5	Omitted Letters 8	

(Hendrickson, 1977, extracted from Hendrickson, 1980, p.164)

On balance, making the decision of which linguistic criterion should be used to correct errors is dependent upon individual teachers' beliefs as well as objectives and the context of the lessons. However, in any case, selective and systematic correction with those highlighted criteria allows the teachers to deal with errors more objectively. It also allows the learners to enhance their motivation and self-confidence (Burt, 1975, cited in Hendrickson, 1980), and most importantly, using the above correction criteria appears to be a more efficient and enjoyable instructional technique than responding to all errors with a red pen.

2.3.4 Types of Error Treatment Methods: How to Correct?

2.3.4.1 Introduction

Besides the questions whether and what errors to correct, there is another important question to ask – how should learner errors be corrected? Although providing correct forms of learner errors is one of the most popular techniques among many language teachers (Hendrickson, 1980), the use of various types of treatment methods has been recommended as it is considered to be more effective and successful than relying upon a single technique (Lynch, 1996, cited in Muncie, 2000). Holley and King (1971, cited in Hendrickson, ibid.) suggest that the teachers should not use the methods which make learners feel embarrassed or frustrated. Therefore, teachers should be more sensitive about how to respond to learner errors. This section will investigate the literature that contains various types of treatment methods suggested by the theorists and practitioners. To begin with, the effectiveness of both explicit and implicit types of correction methods will be reviewed. Then, it will examine how the degree of explicitness of treatment methods should be changed according to learners' variety in terms of the level

of target language proficiency and the purpose of target language learning as well as the relationship between the degree of explicitness and the types of learner errors. Finally, the analysis of the effectiveness of the use of correction codes will be reviewed.

2.3.4.2 Explicit Correction vs. Implicit Correction

Teachers' treatment of errors can be broadly distinguished as either explicit or implicit correction (Ayoun, 2001). The former, explicit correction, has been defined as detailed direct correction, which indicates that teachers provide learners with exact forms or structures of their erroneous utterances. On the other hand, the latter, implicit correction, has been termed as indirect correction which means that teachers indicate the presence of errors or provide some sorts of clues with the intention of peer-correction or self-correction (see Ferris, 1995b; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Hendrickson, 1980; 1984; Lalande, 1982; Walz, 1982). As the opinions for their effects are various (Tono and Kanatani, 1996), some studies that advocate the effectiveness of explicit types of correction (Chaudron, 1987) will primarily be examined.

According to Edge (1989), when teachers do not understand what learners are trying to communicate, they should provide correct ways of writing what they think the learners want to write. She states that if the teachers are right, their correction gives a clear model of correct utterance, and even if they are wrong, it encourages the learners to try again to write what they actually meant. Explicit correction is also effective when teachers deal with certain types of learner errors. Kubota (2001) states that discovering the appropriate words or structures could be extremely difficult for learners, because they cannot consult with any materials, such as grammar books or dictionaries.

Therefore, explicit correction for those errors could provide learners opportunities to acquire the correct usage without any frustration. Myer (1997) suggests that teachers should correct wrongly written words or phrases explicitly just like they unhesitatingly provide the exact words or phrases in a stream of spoken discourse. Zamel (1985, p.89) asserts that teachers' comments like "*What do you mean?*", "*Word Form*" and "*Wrong Word*" do not help learners understand their problems. The findings from Hayer and Daiker's 1984 study also show that feedback like "*unclear*" or "*be more specific*" are little help to the students (cited in Cohen, 1987, p.58). Similar opinion can be seen in Keh's (1990, p.302) study that one-word questions, such as "*Why?*" are problematic since they do not provide enough information for the learners to correct by themselves. He mentions that the learners also find these kinds of comments are less helpful than others with more detailed information.

In addition to the above, Semke's 1984 study reveals that implicit types of correction, which require self-correction, are less effective than explicit types in terms of the learners' achievement as well as attitudes (cited in Saito, 1994). More recently, Nassaji and Swain's (2000, p.49) study concludes that "there was a tendency for more direct and explicit prompts to be more useful than less direct implicit prompts". Their finding is consistent with those of Carroll, Swain and Roberge's 1992 study as well as Carroll and Swain's 1993 study which reveals the effectiveness of explicit correction. To sum up, there are certain situations where teachers' implications to the errors cannot be well perceived by the learners. In such cases, it seems that teachers should provide the correct forms or structures as a model, so that learners can clearly see their problems.

However, despite the above results, some other researchers argue that providing correct forms does not improve the target language performance (see Courchene, 1980; Hendrickson, 1980; Robb *et al*., 1986). Tono and Kanatani (1996) state that explicit treatment is only effective for gifted learners. It means that for other learners, it is generally ineffective. Similarly, Lightbown (2000, p.446), who examined ten generalisations from SLA research, points out that the evidence supports the idea that "explicit error correction is usually ineffective in changing language behaviour". Woods (1989) asserts that explicit correction of learner errors not only hinders the improvement of the communicative competence but also produces negative consequences in learners. Researchers' attitudes toward explicit correction are fairly negative, and there are many opinions that suggest implicit correction. In fact, recent studies tend to investigate the effectiveness of implicit types of treatment (Ayoun, 2001).

Hammerly (1991, p.106) asserts that "learning can only take place when students experience the cognitive modifications that will enable them to use each structure and element correctly". In other words, learners have to be encouraged to discover the right forms or structures by themselves in order to remember the accurate language. Learners must correct their own errors using teachers' hints or some materials. Therefore, teachers' implicit clues are considered to be more useful than explicit correction for the learners (Hammerly, 1991). Likewise, Lyster (1998) maintains that corrective feedback which requires self-correction provides the learners opportunities to acquire the process of target language learning. Actually, self-correction has been recommended by many researchers. To illustrate, the following shows the suggestion made by Brookes and Grundy (1990, p.54).

> …in writing… self-correction is preferable to peer correction, and peer correction to teacher correction. And because rewriting or self-correction is so important a writing skill, a good teacher will provide the maximum classroom opportunity for it, and indeed will include rewriting ability in any overall evaluation of learners' writing skills.

Apparently, implicit correction makes learners more responsible for their learning (Allwright, 1981) and also helps teachers to save time, as it is less time consuming than correcting errors explicitly (Raimes, 1991). Besides that, Frantzen and Rissel (1987), and Myles (2002) assert that developing the abilities to edit one's written utterances is one of writing goals of language learners. Also, Makino (1993), and Tono and Kanatani (1996) state that even simple underlining that indicates the location of errors is beneficial for learners. Therefore, implicit correction gives learners the chance to improve their self-editing skills as well.

To conclude, there is a controversy among researchers in terms of effectiveness of both explicit and implicit correction. However, both types of treatment seem to have certain advantages and disadvantages; thus, it would be better for teachers to use various techniques depending on individual learners and the context of lessons. In fact, both types of treatment should be effective for adult language learners (Carroll & Swain, 1993). Some researchers, such as Hendrickson (1984) suggest that they should be used in hybrid fashion, and several methods that vary in their explicitness have been introduced. The next section discusses the aspects that have to be taken into account in order to decide the degree of their explicitness and how the degree of their explicitness should be changed according to those aspects.

2.3.4.3 Degree of Explicitness

In Hendrickson's 1984 study, he states that there are four learner factors that have to be considered in order to decide the ways to correct errors.

(1) learners' level of proficiency in the target language
(2) learners' purposes of target language learning
(3) types of errors
(4) individual learners' attitudes toward error correction

(Hendrickson, 1984, pp.146-147)

As different learners react differently to error correction (Nunan & Lamb, 1996), the degree of explicitness should be changed depending on individual learners' attitudes toward error correction. Furthermore, due to the fact that the scope of the current study does not take into account factor (4), a review of the literature of this factor would be redundant and will therefore not be carried out. The literature does however suggest how the degree of correction's explicitness should be changed depending on the learners' level of proficiency in the target language, learners' purposes of the target language learning and the types of errors. Thus, those three factors that fall in the scope of the current study will be analysed below.

2.3.4.3.1 Level of Target Language Proficiency

How much learners are able to write in the target language is one of the most important factors in order to determine what types of error treatment methods should be used. According to Hendrickson (1984), when learners' level of proficiency increases, they become more capable to correct their own mistakes. Since beginners and intermediate

learners have acquired less knowledge about the target language systems than advanced learners have, their limited linguistic competence is often insufficient to allow them to find the locations of their errors and correct them. Consequently, more detailed information of errors is necessary for those learners (Mantello, 1997). On the other hand, simple indication of the location or presence of errors can be enough for more advanced learners as they are able to deal with their own mistakes more efficiently (Hendrickson, ibid.). In short, for the lower proficient learners, more explicit correction should be given.

2.3.4.3.2 Purpose of Target Language Learning

In addition to the level of proficiency, for what purpose learners want to develop their target language performance is also an important factor in deciding treatment methods. Eskey (1983) comments that acquiring a minimum communicative competence is not enough, and more accuracy is important for learners with a serious need for language. In other words, learners who pursue higher education are required to acquire more accurate language. Ferris (1999, p.8) states that “professors feel that students’ linguistic errors are bothersome and affect their overall evaluation of student papers”. Therefore, linguistic accuracy is important for learners’ field of study as well. Ferris maintains that learners should be encouraged to improve their self-editing skills. Moreover, Tono and Kanatani (1996) assert that if students’ academic level is very high, identifying the location of errors, such as underlining, can be effective for correcting their own mistakes. To sum up, learners who study English for academic purposes require more implicit types of correction than those who study general English skills, because they have to be able to edit their own academic writing.

2.3.4.3.3 Types of Errors

Finally, the literature has also suggested how the degree of explicitness should be changed depending on the types of errors. Some researchers, such as Robb, Ross and Shortreed (1986) assert that for surface errors, implicit correction methods work sufficiently. They maintain that since the practice of highly detailed feedback on surface errors may not be worth teachers spending their time and energy on it and that less time-consuming correction methods to direct learners' attention to their surface errors can be more efficient. Lalande's 1982 study also suggests that for grammatical and spelling errors, learners should only be informed of the location and features of mistakes so as to require the learners to correct their own errors. Similarly, Fathman and Whalley (1990) found that the students whose grammatical errors were simply underlined by the teachers made fewer grammatical errors when they rewrite their compositions. They further state that the identification of the location of errors seems to help learners work on their grammatical errors. In addition to that, Hammerly (1991) recommends that for misspelled words, implicit types of treatment methods, such as put 'sp' above the words or just indicate the presence of errors are effective, because learners must find the correct spelling without copying from teacher models.

Seemingly, there is a consensus among the researchers that as for grammatical and orthographic errors, implicit types of correction methods are more effective than those of explicit types. Haswell's study conducted in 1983 confirmed that when the presence of unquestionable errors, such as errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalisation and grammar were informed with the line in the margin, students were able to correct sixty to seventy percent of their errors by themselves. Similarly, Ferris *et al.*'s study

conducted in 2000 reveals that students were able to correct eighty percent of their errors indicated by their teachers (cited in Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Therefore, teachers should not spend so much time providing the correct forms for those errors from the beginning; specific correction methods are only necessary when learners cannot carry out correction by themselves (Haswell, 1983; Hendrickson, 1980).

Some researchers, however, state that explicit correction for certain grammatical errors is useful (Tono and Kanatani, 1996). For example, Myers (1997, p.4) asserts that "[s]imply pointing out what is wrong in surface level grammar, whether through grammar lessons, proofreading symbols, or underlining does not correspond to the process of producing writing". Myers points out that for errors in sentence-level syntax and vocabulary, teachers should directly supply the exact structures or words as they normally do for spoken errors. She further states that this method, called 'reformations', will provide learners opportunities to repeat the correct usage and make them more conscious of grammar and word usage. Similar suggestions can be seen in Hendrickson's 1980 study whereby semantic errors, such as meanings of the words and misplaced phrases should be corrected directly.

In Ferris' 1999 research, she made a useful distinction of errors: treatable and untreatable. She states that rule-governed errors, such as those in subject-verb agreement, run-on, comma splices, missing articles and verb form errors are treatable, whereas lexical errors, wrong sentence construction, missing words, unnecessary words, and wrong word order are categorised as untreatable errors. According to Ferris, it is inadequate to provide implicit types of correction like underlining or abbreviation for

those untreatable errors because they have no rules to consult. Therefore, for errors that are not rule-governed, use of explicit correction methods is recommended.

To sum up, in order to deal with unquestionable errors, such as misspelling or wrong tense, implicit correction methods can be sufficient. On the other hand, in terms of certain types of errors, such as wrong word order or wrong word usage, discovering the appropriate structures or finding the right word is extremely difficult for learners; thus, explicit types of correction methods are considered to be more helpful and effective.

2.3.4.4 Correction Codes

Since a large proportion of the literature has recommended the use of correction codes (for example, see Bartram & Walton, 1991; Hyland, 1990; Oshima, 1991), a review of particular correction methods should be considered. Correction codes include symbols (e.g. '*( )→*'for a misplaced phrase or '*?*' for a confusing phrase, extracted from Hendrickson, 1984, p.148) and abbreviation for grammatical terms (e.g. '*T*' for wrong tense or '*Sp*' for misspelling, extracted from Walz, 1982, p.28). (For more detailed examples of correction codes, see Appendix 1)

Hyland (1990) states that coded correction allows teachers to reduce negative and disheartening effects of indicating mistakes without reducing the benefits of error treatment. Sometimes teachers are overly preoccupied with accuracy. As a result, students' writings are often covered with red ink (Harmer, 1991). However, with correction codes, teachers can simply indicate both types and location of errors (Sheppard, 1992). Moreover, they can focus on the teaching point that is being taught

and ones that have been taught (Bruder & Furey, 1979, cited in Zamel, 1985). Hyland (1990, p.280) asserts that learners should not be discouraged by over correction, and this approach to deal with errors is “a step toward minimal marking”.

Despite the fact that coded corrections have been suggested frequently in many teaching manuals (see Harmer, 2001; Tribble, 1996), interestingly, some of the current professional literature advises that abbreviations and correction symbols should be avoided (Hayes & Daiker, 1984, cited in Cohen, 1987). For instance, Moxley (1989, p.3) made a recommendation to “[a]void excessive abstract, formulaic textbook language such as ‘edit for efficiency!’; ‘transition?’; ‘v/ag’; ‘p/ag’; etc”. The reason behind this is that students are not used to edit their writings with those symbols, and in fact, past research shows that students do not understand how to use them (Moxley, ibid.). The following shows the example of learner errors corrected with correction codes (see Appendix 1 for the keys for the correction codes).

Ag V
Urbanisation have caused out great diversity of lifestyle to regress.
T
People leave to leaving to cities leaves part of their cultural values.
WF
Health services is another factor. The effective of modern drugs
Ar WF Sp
cause the people to loss of confidence in traditional medecene.

(Extracted from Hyland, 1990, p.280)

Even though it might be true that the use of correction codes is beneficial for learners, if they do not understand the codes, it is worthless. In a similar way, Myers (1997, p.4)

made the following statement.

> Making papers (‘ab, dm, cs, empha, frag, agr,’ and that most dreaded epithet of all ‘awk!’) requires that ESL students learn a new specialized system of symbols, learn where to find them, find them, interpret what they mean, and try to correct what they seem to point to. All of these laborious procedures lead the student farther and farther away from his or her text into ever more abstract, unrelated operations.

Seemingly, using ambiguous or correction codes that are too complicated may place an extra burden upon learners to decode and work through each type of error. Bartram and Walton (1991) state that in order to avoid inconsistency and ambiguity, teachers must keep using the same symbol for the same type of error. Moreover, a limited number of codes have to be used as all errors cannot always be categorised accurately (Hyland, 1990). Most importantly, teachers have to let learners familiarise themselves with the system of error correction (Edge, 1989). Otherwise, they do not understand “what *frag* or *awk* means” or “why there is a question mark above the word” (Raimes, 1991, p.57).

2.4 Concluding Remarks

As previously mentioned, there has been controversy regarding whether errors should be corrected or not. From the review of the literature, it has been found that correction should not be carried out unless it is consistent with learners’ developmental sequence of interlanguage system and natural acquisition order. However, some researchers support the benefits of error treatment for adult language learners who learn the target language in a formal setting. Unlike young children, adult learners require teacher

correction in order to acquire the correct forms cognitively and also as a means to enhance their motivation.

Although the usefulness of error treatment has been clarified, the literature does suggest that it has to be provided selectively. Analysis of the related studies shows that three types of criteria can be used to determine the errors that should be corrected. If there are many errors in a piece of writing, teachers should focus on the following types of errors: (1) those relevant to the features of the target language that has been taught; (2) those frequently produced; and (3) those that hinder communication. The first criterion is changeable depending on the purpose and context of a particular lesson. The second and the third criteria can be met by developing a hierarchy of error treatment based on frequent errors and by incorporating global/local distinctions respectively.

Another issue concerns the error treatment methods. While there is a tendency to recommend implicit types of correction methods, there are certain cases where providing the correct forms is more appropriate. Apart from learners' proficiency level and learning purpose, the types of errors are one of the most important aspects that have to be taken into account when teachers decide correction methods. The literature suggests that some rule-governed errors can be corrected implicitly, whereas untreatable errors cannot. For the latter cases, hence, more detailed correction has to be provided. Consequently, the degree of explicitness of correction must be different depending on the types of errors teachers correct. In terms of the use of correction codes, there are certain advantages and disadvantages. In order to use this approach to treat learner errors effectively, teachers must provide a limited set of consistent and unambiguous

correction codes. Moreover, teachers must let learners understand what each code means.

This chapter has attempted to investigate various theoretical assumptions as well as empirical research findings pertaining to the present study that examines language teachers' treatment of written errors. Despite the fact that a number of counterarguments have been offered, and the need for further research to investigate the certain effects of correction has been urged, nevertheless, a sufficient body of literature has reported evidence that supports the significant roles of error treatment. This review of the literature has provided a number of suggestions for L2 teachers to deal with learner errors in effective ways, and these data will be valuable when comparisons with actual classroom practice are made in later stages. The following chapter will outline the methodological component of the current research.

CHAPTER 3
Methodology and Procedure

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to identify and analyse how ESL teachers deal with learners' written errors in the context of Bond University on the Gold Coast. Following identification and analysis of the teachers' patterns of error treatment, the study will then highlight the relationship between what the literature suggests and actual classroom practice in terms of error treatment of written work. This chapter will present the methodological components of the study in the following order: research questions, sample selection; research methods; research tools; and finally data analysis.

3.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated in order to achieve the aims established for the current study. These questions were also intended to provide the key focal points in order to orient this research.

1. How frequently do ESL teachers correct learner errors?

2. Does the frequency of error treatment differ depending on the types of learner errors?

    2.1 What types of learner errors do ESL teachers frequently correct?

    2.2 What types of learner errors do ESL teachers rarely correct?

3. What types of error treatment methods do ESL teachers use?

4. Does the degree of explicitness of error treatment methods differ depending on the types of learner errors?

    4.1 What types of learner errors do ESL teachers correct explicitly?

    4.2 What types of learner errors do ESL teachers correct implicitly?

5. Is there any relationship between error treatment and the level of the course?

6. Is there any relationship between error treatment and the type of the course?

3.3 Sample Selection

3.3.1 Introduction

This section of the methodology will focus on the description of the subjects selected for the current study. As previously mentioned, the main aim of the study is to investigate a specific English teaching context at Bond University.

3.3.2 Teachers

A total of nine (9) teachers, who were working in the ESL courses at Bond University, participated in this study: two teachers in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences; and seven teachers in BUELI. The following Table 3-1 shows the name of the courses and a brief description of the courses that the teachers were in charge of when the sample texts were collected.

Table 3-1

Description of the Teacher Sample and Their Courses

BUELI (General English Courses)

Teacher	Course	Course description
GE3	General English 3	Developing general English Skills in speaking, listening, reading, writing and basic grammar
GE4	General English 4	
GE5	General English 5	
GE6	General English 6	

BUELI (Exam Preparation Course)

Teacher	Course	Course description
CFC	Cambridge First Certificate	Developing English Skills specifically for the CFC exam

BUELI (English for Academic Purposes Courses)

Teacher	Course	Course description
EAP1	EAP 1	Developing English and study skills required to undertake Australian and international tertiary courses
EAP3	EAP 3	

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Teacher	Course	Course description
AWS	Academic Writing Skills	Develops each stage of the academic writing process to enhance essay writing skills as well as sub-skills
WWPS	Academic Writing Workshop for Postgraduate Students	

(Sources: Bond University course description, 2002; Grunner, 2001)

In total, ten different courses in BUELI were selected for the initial survey: five levels of the General English courses (GE), three levels of English for academic purposes

courses (EAP), one Cambridge First Certificate exam preparation course (CFC) and one Business English course. However, a sample from the GE2 course was not included as the researcher was told that the students in the GE2 course only wrote at sentence level and that the teacher rarely collected their writings. Samples from the EAP2 and the Business English courses were also excluded due to the researcher's limited time availability not providing sufficient opportunities to meet the teachers within the given time period. In terms of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, there are two different academic writing courses for international students: Academic Writing Skills (AWS) and Academic Writing Workshop for Postgraduate Students (WWPS). The contents of these courses were similar and were differed according to the need of the students: undergraduate and postgraduate.

3.3.3 Student Writings

Originally, sixty eight (68) pieces of writings were collected within a time period of two weeks. However, after examining all the titles and contents of the texts, it was discovered that two pieces of writing were products of previous correction by two teachers and were thus excluded for not being original correction samples. Consequently, in total, sixty six (66) pieces of writing corrected by nine (9) different ESL teachers were selected and analysed for this study.

In order to obtain the highest level of authentic treatment of errors as possible, the purpose of the study was not explained to the teachers. Therefore, the topic of writing, the length of writing and the purpose of activities varied depending on the contents of the lessons. The learners' and teachers' personal details such as names, gender or

nationalities were not specifically asked, because the researcher was not investigating sociocultural influences on errors but actual types of error correction provided by teachers, and thus, such information was considered to be irrelevant. The numbers and main topics or types of sample texts are as follows (for more details, see Appendix 2).

Table 3-2

Description of the Sample Texts

Teacher	**No. of samples**	**Level of the course**	**Main topics / Types of writing**
GE 3	10	Pre-intermediate	My weekend My life in my country
GE 4	2	Intermediate	Informal letter
GE 5	6	Intermediate to Upper-intermediate	Informal letter
GE 6	7	Upper-intermediate to Advanced	If I won a million dollars
CFC	8	Upper-intermediate to Advanced	Formal letter Informal letter
EAP 1	7	Intermediate to Upper-intermediate	Argumentative essay
EAP 3	9	Upper-intermediate to Advanced	Summarising
AWS	8	Advanced	Argumentative essay (Diagnostic test)
WWPS	9	Advanced	Argumentative essay (Diagnostic test)
Total	**66**		

3.4 Research Methods

3.4.1 Methods

As a large part of the current study involves the analysis of the types of learner errors, the methods frequently used in the area of Error Analysis (EA) research were adopted. In 1974, Corder suggested the following steps in EA research: collection of a sample of learner language; identification; description; and explanation of learner errors (cited in Ellis, 1994). In short, after collecting a corpus of language samples, learner errors are identified, categorised and analysed. On this basis, the following procedures were carried out in order to achieve the objectives of this research:

- collecting the pieces of students' writing corrected by the ESL teachers working at Bond University;
- photocopying those texts and tracing the teachers' treatment with a coloured pen referring to the original texts;
- making transcriptions and identifying all learner errors and error treatment methods;
- classifying the types of learner errors and the types of error treatment methods with the classification codes;
- calculating the percentages of each classification code; and
- analysing the results.

3.4.2 Pilot Study

The pilot study was carried out in April 2001 at BUELI, which aimed at (1) determining the classification of the types of learner errors as well as the types of teacher treatment

used for the main study, and (2) identifying and eliminating the possible problems prior to implementing the main study. The researcher collected classroom writings from students in the General English courses at BUELI. The students' levels of proficiency in English varied between intermediate and advanced. The topic of their writings also varied depending on the contents of the lessons. A total of ten pieces of writings were collected, photocopied and returned to the students soon after.

Some difficulties arose when determining the classifications for the learner errors. At first, based on research (for example, Dulay *et al*., 1982; Haswell, 1983), it was planned to classify the learner errors into five types based on the following linguistic categories: morphological errors, syntactical errors, semantic errors, lexical errors, and orthographical errors. However, as the actual features of learner errors were so diverse and complex, it was necessary to employ a more varied and detailed taxonomy to classify them.

As far as the types of treatment methods are concerned, all types of treatment methods used by the teachers were classified into the following four categories: providing the correct form; giving a hint; putting a correction symbol or abbreviation; and indicating the location of the error. A more detailed explanation of the taxonomy used for the main study will be presented in the subsequent section of Research Tools.

3.4.3 Main Study

In June 2001, the main study was carried out. The ESL teachers working at Bond University were asked to view their students' writings over a period of two weeks. The

teachers were informed that the focus of collection was to analyse the types of written errors. Minimum explanation about the actual purpose of this research was given until they had completed their feedback on the writings. With the teachers' great contribution toward the study, maximum authentic data in natural settings were collected promptly and smoothly. It was agreed that the writings would only be used for research purposes and students' names would be kept anonymous so as not to invade their privacy.

3.5 Research Tools

3.5.1 Introduction

This section will present research tools used to conduct the current study. The taxonomy used to categorise the types of learner errors corrected by the teachers will be clarified. It will be followed by presenting the taxonomy for the types of error treatment methods. In each section, some examples extracted from the students' original writings will be included in order to illustrate the classification clearly.

3.5.2 Classification of Learner Errors

Taking into account the shortcoming of insufficient categorisation in the pilot study, the taxonomy used for the classification of learner errors was reconsidered. The types of ESL learners' frequent errors introduced by Ferris and Roberts (2001) and Robinett (1972, cited in Walz, 1982) in the previous literature review section were adapted, and the following eight types of errors were chosen. In addition, referring to the description of learner errors used by Ferris and Roberts (ibid.), each type of error was further classified into more specific items.

(1) Verb errors

Wrong verb tense, wrong verb form and relevant subject-verb agreement errors

e.g. They *are go* to the elementary school and kindergarten.

Why *does* it famous?

(2) Noun ending errors

Singular/plural or possessive ending errors (omission or unnecessary) and relevant subject-verb agreement errors

e.g. There are many *mediaes* to…

There *are* a very big campus…

(3) Article errors

Incorrect use of articles or other determiners, omission or unnecessary words

e.g. I would go to *U.S.A* to improve my English…

The television is *the* good tool for learning.

(4) Wrong word choices

Lexical errors in word choice or word form, including wrong choice of prepositions

e.g. I got really interested *on* it.

The *sightlook* was very beautiful.

(5) Sentence structural errors

Wrong word order, omitted or unnecessary words or phrases, and other sentence construction errors

e.g. I *never ever was* expelled but sometimes I was suspended.

Thousands of US school children were impressed by the video, they write letters of protest to Disney CEO.

(6) Spelling errors

Cacography or word division

e.g. I don't know how and why, but my teachers are so *god*.

It is clean and you can use a *looker*.

(7) Punctuation errors

Incorrect, omission or unnecessary punctuations, incorrect capitalisations

e.g. Of *course we* are very tired.

Many people from other *countries*, *even*, *know* about the dingoes.

(8) Other errors

All the other types of linguistic errors which cannot be classified into the above categories, such as register errors or miscellaneous grammatical errors

3.5.3 Classification of Error Treatment Methods

From the implementation of the pilot study, the taxonomy of error treatment methods was determined. All types of treatment methods can be classified into four different categories according to their degree of explicitness. This section will illustrate those, beginning with the most explicit type of treatment method.

(A) Providing the Actual correction (Correction)

- Providing the correct form or structure with or without an underline and/or a correction code.

e.g. *WW about*

I am interested to know more how your course.

- Providing the correct form or structure with or without an underline.

  e.g. take
  To keep up with world, we must learn some courses accordingly.

- Crossing out a superfluous word or phrase.

  e.g. Last holiday we went to shopping…

(B) Giving a hint (Hint)

- Providing a hint or clue with a location indicator.

  e.g. not necessary
  I'd like some souvenirs (which can know Australia well)…

  make use of pronouns
  …because the Disney made contact with its subcontractors.

(C) Using a correction code (Code)

- Putting an abbreviation with or without an underline.

  e.g. S/V
  Kernaghan believe that consumer pressure can change the conditions.

- Putting a correction symbol.

  We were holded on having playing games.

(D) Indicating the location of the error (Indicator)

- Underlining to indicate the location of the error.

  e.g. …as long as you are not dependent of it.

- Circling to indicate the location of the error.

  It was places where we could see a lot of nature.

- Inserting an arrow to indicate the location of a missing word.

  e.g. My mother is kind and very good wife.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Introduction

This section will describe how the data obtained through the research tools were arranged and analysed in this research. To begin with, the analysis of quantitative data will be depicted. In this section, some noteworthy points with regard to the analysis of the sample total and variables will be included. Then, the description of the analysis of qualitative data will be presented.

3.6.2 Quantitative Data

3.6.2.1 Procedure for Analysis

Referring to Grotejahn's distinction of the research tradition in applied linguistics, the current study falls into the 'analytical-nomological' paradigm that utilises an experimental method, yields quantitative data, and provides statistical analysis (1987, cited in Nunan, 1992). Brown (1988) points out that experimental research should proceed systematically and logically. He further asserts that the data of experimental research must be collected from the real world and quantifiable. It means that, in his words, "each datum must be a number that represents some well-defined quantity, rank, or category" (p.4). With Brown's statement in mind, the analysis of the data was carried out, step-by-step, in the following order.

First of all, using the research tools, seventy six possible types of classification codes were prepared. These classification codes consisted of eight types of learner errors which were further divided into nineteen categories and four types of error treatment methods (see Table 3-3 below for tabulation of these codes).

Table 3-3

76 Types of Classification Codes

	(A) Correction	(B) Hint	(C) Code	(D) Indicator
(1) Verb errors				
a) Wrong verb tense	1aA	1aB	1aC	1aD
b) Wrong verb form	1bA	1bB	1bC	1bD
c) Subject/verb disagreement	1cA	1cB	1cC	1cD
(2) Noun ending errors				
a) Singular/plural error	2aA	2aB	2aC	2aD
b) Wrong possessive ending	2bA	2bB	2bC	2bD
c) Subject/verb disagreement	2cA	2cB	2cC	2cD
(3) Article errors				
a) Article omission	3aA	3aB	3aC	3aD
b) Unnecessary article	3bA	3bB	3bC	3bD
c) Wrong article use	3cA	3cB	3cC	3cD
(4) Wrong word choices				
a) Wrong preposition choice	4aA	4aB	4aC	4aD
b) Wrong vocabulary choice	4bA	4bB	4bC	4bD
c) Wrong word form	4cA	4cB	4cC	4cD
(5) Sentence structural errors				
a) Wrong word order	5aA	5aB	5aC	5aD
b) Incomplete sentence	5bA	5bB	5bC	5bD
c) Unnecessary word/phrase	5cA	5cB	5cC	5cD
(6) Spelling errors				
a) Spelling error	6aA	6aB	6aC	6aD
(7) Punctuation errors				
a) Punctuation error	7aA	7aB	7aC	7aD
b) Capitalisation error	7bA	7bB	7bC	7bD
(8) Other errors	8A	8B	8C	8D

Following this, all types of errors corrected by the ESL teachers and the treatment methods used to correct those errors for all sixty six pieces of writings were classified according to this coding system. For instance, the classification code of the wrong choice of a preposition corrected with an abbreviation would be ‘4aC’. This would then

be added above the teacher's correction in text and would look like the following example:

e.g.

4aC

WF

I came here <u>for</u> study English.

At the same time, learner errors the teachers did not correct, which were identified by the researcher and a native speaking English teacher beforehand, were also classified in the same way according to their characteristics (e.g. '*1a*' for uncorrected verb tense error). As to establish the reliability of the classification, all errors were classified for two times. By following this procedure, the numbers of corrected and uncorrected learner errors as well as the numbers of treatment methods in each category were computed separately and compiled using Excel spreadsheets. All results were presented in percentage form, and they were rounded off to the nearest first decimal place. It was expected that this formulation could clearly indicate the trend of the teachers' correction patterns and thus enabled the researcher to make various comparisons of the results systematically (for the results of classification, see Appendix 3).

In addition to the above, this research also employed the chi-square test to statistically prove the relationship between the variables and the patterns of error treatment. The alpha decision level set in this research was 0.05 ($\alpha \leq .05$) and is a commonly chosen significance level for linguistics studies (Butler, 1985). The formula of the chi-square test is presented below.

Figure 3-1

Formula of the Chi-square Test

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe}$$

χ^2: Chi-square
$\sum$: Sum of
fo : Observed frequency
fe : Expected frequency

df : Degree of freedom
= (no. of rows – 1) × (no. of columns – 1)
$\alpha \leq .05$

(Brown, 1988; Butler, 1985)

3.6.2.2 Sample Total

In order to obtain an overall picture of the teachers' correction patterns, at first, it was the intention of the researcher to compute the results from all sample texts as one large group. However, at the phase where individual teachers' results were counted, it was noticed that the AWS teacher's patterns of error correction were extremely different from those of other teachers; namely, the number of errors corrected by this teacher were considerably small (41 corrected errors out of 242 total errors). Due to the small sample size, it was considered that this highly untypical result would largely affect and dilute the overall trend (Butler, 1985). Therefore, it was decided that eight sample texts obtained from this course were to be excluded from the analysis of the overall trend. The AWS teacher's pattern of error treatment is presented in a separate section (see Appendix 4), and the result was treated as an exceptional error treatment practice. Consequently, the data obtained from fifty eight written texts corrected by eight teachers were treated as one group and primarily analysed.

3.6.2.3 Variables

For the comparative purpose, the results obtained from the examination of the patterns of error treatment were sorted into groups according to (1) the level of the course and also (2) the type of the course the teachers were teaching. The influence of these two variables on the patterns of error treatment methods was hypothesised due to research read (for more detail, see Chapter 2 Literature Review). The results were compiled group by group, and then, comparative analysis within each variable was carried out. Table 3-3 below summarises the groups and the courses, which fall into each group.

Table 3-4

Variables Examined

Variables	Groups	Courses
(1) Level of course	a) Pre-intermediate to Intermediate	GE3 & GE4
	b) Intermediate to Upper-intermediate	GE5 & EAP1
	c) Upper-intermediate to Advanced	GE6, CFC & EAP3
	d) Advanced	WWPS
(2) Type of course	a) General English	GE3, 4, 5 & 6
	b) Academic English	EAP1, 3 & WWPS

It was also considered that collecting a different number of sample texts for each teacher might cause a bias in the analysis. However, sufficient samples indicating the teachers' common correction patterns were collected to establish adequate patterns.

3.6.3 Qualitative Data

In addition to the analysis for quantitative data, it was considered that the qualitative data analysis was also necessary for the current research to investigate a deeper insight into the practice of error treatment in the specific teaching context. Firstly, the examples of learner errors noticeably corrected were listed with the course names in order to examine any similarities or differences among the teacher's correction patterns. Secondly, various types of error treatment methods frequently used were extracted from the sample texts, and they were subcategorised within each category of error treatment methods according to their features. It was anticipated that these qualitative findings could provide valuable information when the analysis of the relationship between the types of learner errors and the patterns of error treatment was carried out.

3.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has outlined the methodological component of the current research. Firstly, the research questions to focus the study were presented. Secondly, the circumstances surrounding the implementation of the study, including the sample selection of subjects and the rationale for their selection was described. Thirdly, the research methods were presented, along with a brief look at the pilot study conducted in order to determine any potential problems with the main study. The chapter also described the research tools used to implement the study, and finally, the data collection and analysis procedure were outlined. The following chapter will present the results of the major study with regard to the ESL teachers' treatment of written errors.

CHAPTER 4
Presentation of Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter, Presentation of Results, will describe the results from the current research outlining the trends of language teachers' error treatment practice in a specific ESL teaching context. In this study, two types of data analysis were carried out: quantitative and qualitative. Initially, the results obtained from quantifiable analysis of the teachers' patterns of error treatment will be described. This will then be followed by the presentation of the qualitative findings which illustrate the actual examples of ESL teachers' practice of error treatment.

4.2 Description of Error Treatment: Quantitative Findings

4.2.1 Introduction

Using the research tools described in the methodology chapter, the aggregate of all learner errors found in the sample texts was classified into five different categories according to how the teachers dealt with those errors: these were 'Providing the actual correction'; 'Giving a hint'; 'Using a correction code'; 'Indicating the location of the errors'; and also 'Providing no error treatment'. From the results of this classification, the frequency of error treatment as well as the degree of explicitness of error treatment methods was calculated. This section will present five major findings of the quantifiable data analysis of error treatment in the following order: (1) overall frequency of error

treatment, (2) types of learner errors and frequency of error treatment, (3) overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods, (4) types of learner errors and degree of explicitness of error treatment and finally (5) the results of the chi-square test.

4.2.2 Overall Frequency of Error Treatment

4.2.2.1 Introduction

In this section, the results of the overall frequency of error treatment will be presented. The section will consist of three parts. Initially, the results of the overall frequency obtained from the examination of fifty eight sample texts collected from eight teachers will be presented. This will be followed by the description of the data sorted into two groups according to the variables: the level of the course and the type of the course.

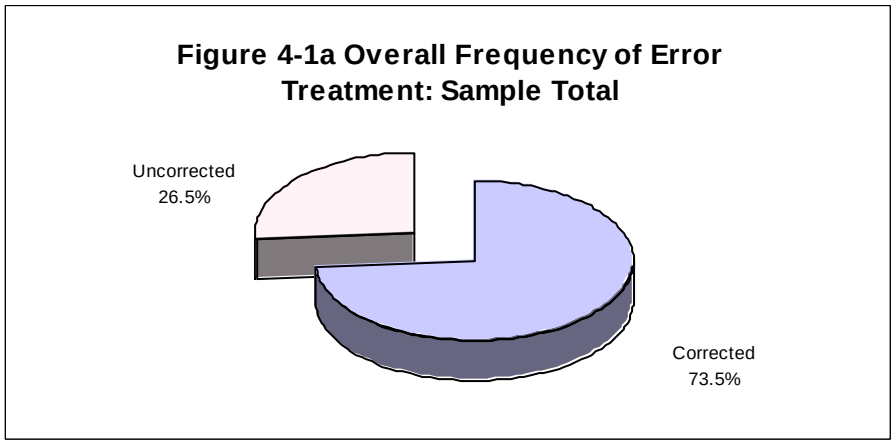
4.2.2.2 Sample Total

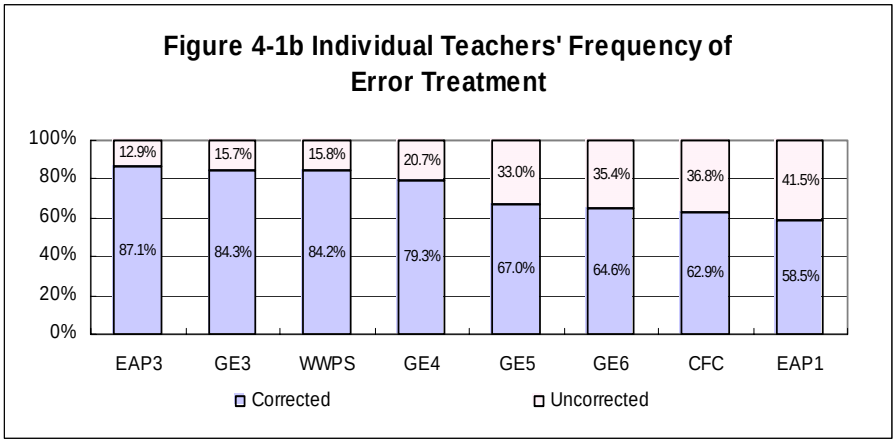
In order to obtain the overall frequency of error treatment, the learner errors found in each course were sorted into two categories depending on whether they were corrected or not corrected. The correction ratio obtained from each course and the mean of all samples are demonstrated in the following Table and Figure 4-1. Paying attention to the average correction rate first, approximately 73.5 per cent of learner errors found in this study were corrected by the teachers whereas the errors that remained uncorrected account only for a quarter of all learner errors on the whole.

Table 4-1

Overall Frequency of Error Treatment: Sample Total

	Text Nos.	Nos. of errors		Ratio	
		Corrected	Uncorrected	Corrected	Uncorrected
GE3	10	263	49	84.3%	15.7%
GE4	2	88	23	79.3%	20.7%
GE5	6	207	102	67.0%	33.0%
GE6	7	106	58	64.6%	35.4%
CFC	8	122	72	62.9%	36.8%
EAP1	7	151	107	58.5%	41.5%
EAP3	9	357	53	87.1%	12.9%
WWPS	9	197	37	84.2%	15.8%
Mean				**73.5%**	**26.5%**





When the individual teachers' percentages of corrected errors are compared, it is notable that the highest rate was obtained in the EAP3 course (87.1%). The GE3 and WWPS courses follow this; as 84.3 per cent and 84.2 per cent of all errors produced by the students were pointed out by their teachers respectively. In contrast to this, the errors were significantly less frequently corrected in the EAP1 course (58.5%), which was the lowest frequency of error treatment among all teacher samples. Whilst the percentages among the teachers vary, the results clearly indicate that the teachers corrected learner errors at a generally high rate.

4.2.2.3 Level of Course

On the basis of the proficiency levels of the courses that the teachers were teaching, the data were sorted into four different groups. These groups are (1) Pre-intermediate to Intermediate level (Pre-IM to IM), (2) Intermediate to Upper-intermediate level (IM to Upper-UM), (3) Upper-intermediate to Advanced level (Upper-IM to AD), and (4) Advanced level. It should be noted that these abbreviations will be used in all related data tables and figures in this and following chapters. All of the data compiled from each group were brought together and compared in order to find out the similarities and differences among the groups. It should also be mentioned here that the results obtained from the AWS course were excluded for the analysis; therefore, the WWPS course solely represents the Advanced level.

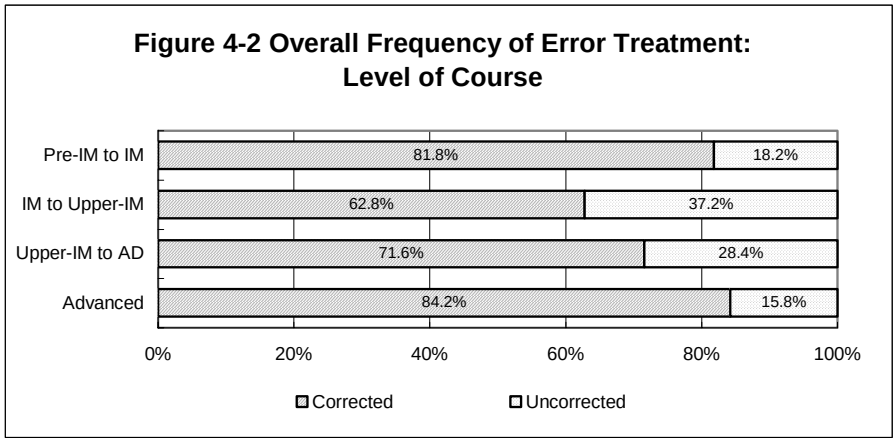
The following Table and Figure 4-2 describe the overall results of the frequency of error treatment obtained from each level. Looking at the percentages of corrected errors, some notable differences among four groups can be found. Approximately 84.2 per cent

of learner errors found in the Advanced level were corrected by the teacher. This is the highest frequency of error treatment among the four groups. The Pre-intermediate to Intermediate level becomes the second, as 81.1 per cent of the errors were corrected on the whole. In contrast, the errors produced in the Upper-intermediate to Advanced level were slightly less often corrected (71.6%). Moreover, the ratio of corrected errors in the Intermediate to Upper-intermediate level decreases to 62.8 per cent of the errors. Error treatment was therefore most frequently carried out in the highest level and the lowest level; however, it was less frequently carried out in the two medium levels.

Table 4-2

Overall Frequency of Error Treatment: Level of Course

	Corrected	Uncorrected
Pre-IM to IM	81.8%	18.2%
IM to Upper-IM	62.8%	37.2%
Upper-IM to AD	71.6%	28.4%
Advanced	84.2%	15.8%



4.2.2.4 Type of Course

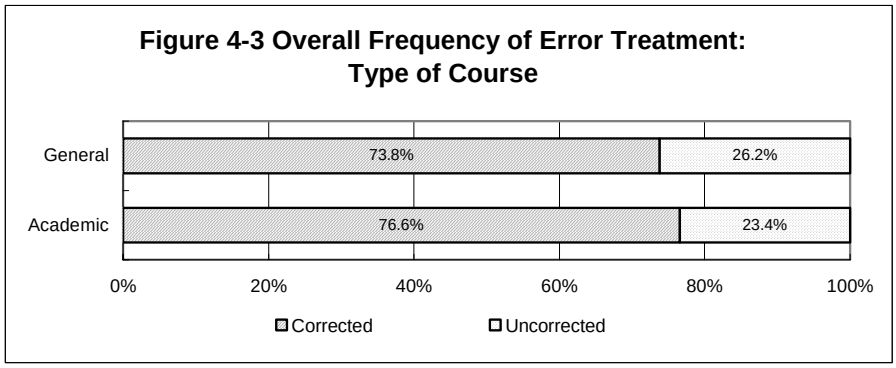
Depending on the variable of the type of the course, the data were sorted into two groups: (1) General English courses and (2) Academic English courses. The results obtained from these groups are compared in Table and Figure 4-3 below. At a first glance, a very similar picture can be observed in the results of the two groups. Approximately 73.8 per cent of the errors produced in the General English courses were corrected by the teachers and 76.6 per cent of errors were pointed out in the Academic English courses. This indicates that there was no significant difference in the overall frequency of error treatment between the two groups.

Table 4-3

Overall Frequency of Error Treatment: Type of Course

	Corrected	Uncorrected
General	73.8%	26.2%
Academic	76.6%	23.4%

Figure 4-3 Overall Frequency of Error Treatment: Type of Course



4.2.3 Types of Learner Errors and Frequency of Error Treatment

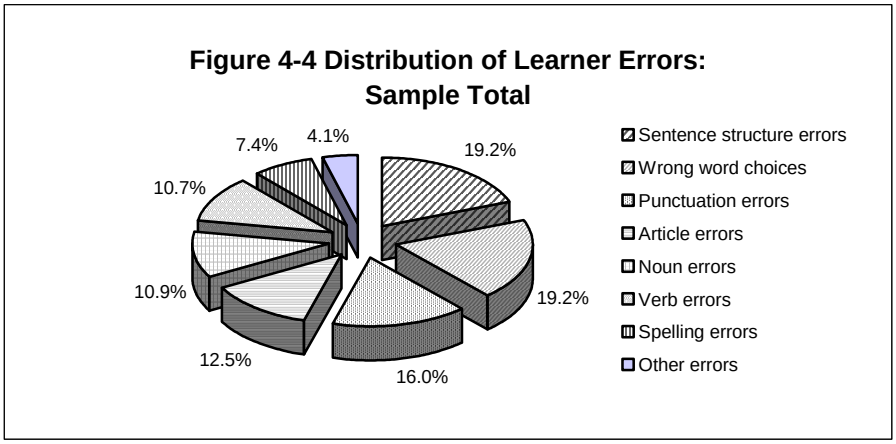
4.2.3.1 Introduction

This section will focus on the relationship between the types of learner errors and the frequency of error treatment. Before presenting the frequency of error treatment, firstly, the general distribution of all learner errors found in fifty eight sample texts is described in the following Table and Figure 4-4.

Table 4-4

Distribution of Learner Errors: Sample Total

Types of errors	Nos. of errors	Ratio
1. Verb errors	213	10.7%
2. Noun ending errors	217	10.9%
3. Article errors	249	12.5%
4. Wrong word choices	382	19.2%
5. Sentence structural errors	383	19.2%
6. Spelling errors	148	7.4%
7. Punctuation errors	318	16.0%
8. Other errors	82	4.1%
Total	1992	100%



According to the results, it is notable that 383 learner errors were ‘Sentence structural errors’ and 382 learner errors were ‘Wrong word choices’ (19.2% each). This indicates that these types of errors were the most frequently produced by the learners examined in this research. The number of the errors classified into the category of ‘Punctuation errors’ is 318, which represents 16 per cent of all errors. In contrast with this, the numbers of the errors in '‘Verb errors’ and ‘Spelling errors’ were relatively small (213 and 148): these errors account for 10.7 per cent and 7.4 per cent of all errors respectively. There were 82 learner errors which the researcher was unable to identify in terms of a succinct category and thus regarded them as ‘Other errors’. These errors comprise 4.1 per cent of all learner errors, and thus, 95.9 per cent of errors were classified and used for individual analysis. With these results in mind, the next section presents types of errors teachers frequently and rarely correct. It should be noted here that the errors in the category of ‘Other errors’ will be excluded in this section as this category was merely prepared for the case in which errors did not fall into the other categories and therefore does not represent any particular type of errors.

4.2.3.2 Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected

4.2.3.2.1 Sample Total

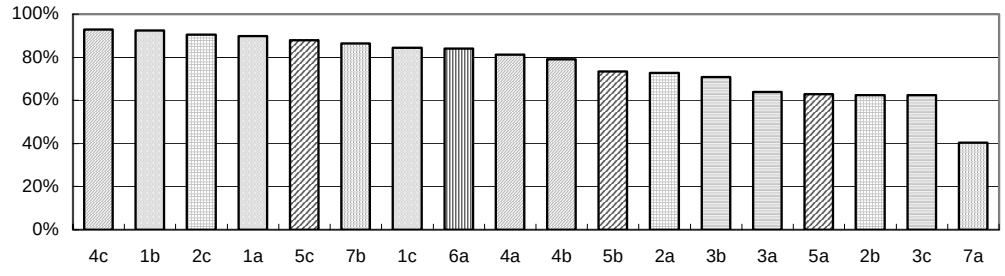
This section will present the types of learner errors the teachers frequently corrected. To begin with, the results of the sample total will be focused. The following Table and Figure 4-5 summarise the percentages of corrected errors with regard to eighteen types of learner errors.

Table 4-5

Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected: Sample Total

Types of learner errors		% of corrected errors
4c	**Wrong word form**	96.0%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	92.4%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	90.5%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	89.9%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	88.0%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	86.5%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	84.5%
6a	**Spelling error**	84.1%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	81.3%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	78.8%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	73.4%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	71.9%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	70.9%
3a	**Article omission**	64.0%
5a	**Wrong word order**	62.9%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	62.5%
3c	**Wrong article use**	62.4%
7a	**Punctuation error**	40.4%

Figure 4-5 Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected: Sample Total



Although the frequency of error treatment slightly varies, considerably high rates can be observed in many categories. The results show, for example, 96 per cent of ‘wrong word form’, 92.4 per cent of ‘wrong verb form’ and 90.5 per cent of ‘noun related

subject/verb disagreement' were corrected by the teachers. This is followed by 'wrong verb tense' (89.9%), 'unnecessary word/phrase' (88%) and 'capitalisation error' (86.5%) which also obtained frequent correction. In addition to these types of errors, 84.5 per cent of 'verb related subject/verb disagreement' as well as 84.1 per cent of 'spelling error' were corrected by the teachers. This indicates that the teachers paid considerable attention to those aspects of the learner errors.

4.2.3.2.2 Level of Course

Pre-intermediate to Intermediate Level (GE3&4)

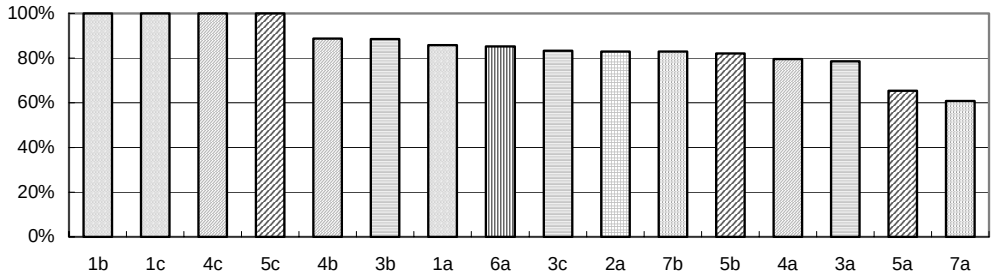
This section will present the results of the frequently corrected errors obtained from the Pre-intermediate to Intermediate level, namely, the lowest level group. As two types of noun ending errors, 'wrong possessive ending' and 'noun related subject/verb disagreement', were not found in the sample texts collected from this group, the frequency of error treatment for 16 types of errors was analysed. The results are summarised in following Table and Figure 4-6. Looking at the results, it is noticeable that most types of errors were frequently corrected by the teachers. For example, 'wrong verb form', 'verb related subject/verb disagreement', 'wrong word form' and also 'unnecessary word/phrase' were perfectly corrected (100% each). In addition to this, the majority of 'wrong vocabulary choice' and 'unnecessary article' were also pointed out by the teachers (88.7% and 88.5% respectively). Seemingly, no particular type of error was focused on in this group.

Table 4-6

Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected: Pre-IM to IM Level

Types of learner errors		% of corrected errors
1b	**Wrong verb form**	100.0%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	100.0%
4c	**Wrong word form**	100.0%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	100.0%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	88.7%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	88.5%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	85.8%
6a	**Spelling error**	85.2%
3c	**Wrong article use**	83.3%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	83.0%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	83.0%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	82.1%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	79.5%
3a	**Article omission**	78.6%
5a	**Wrong word order**	65.5%
7a	**Punctuation error**	60.9%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	N/A
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	N/A

Figure 4-6 Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected: Pre-IM to IM Level



Intermediate to Upper-intermediate Level (GE5 & EAP1)

The following Table and Figure 4-7 summarise the results of the frequently corrected

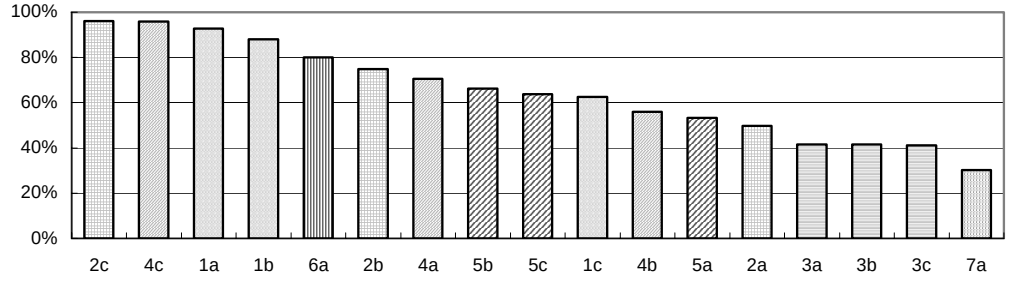
errors with regard to the second lowest level group, the Intermediate to Upper-intermediate level. As no capitalisation errors were found in the sample texts, 17 types of errors were examined.

Table 4-7

Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected: IM to Upper-IM Level

Types of learner errors		% of corrected errors
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	96.2%
4c	**Wrong word form**	95.8%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	92.9%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	88.1%
6a	**Spelling error**	80.1%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	75.0%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	70.7%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	66.2%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	63.9%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	62.5%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	56.0%
5a	**Wrong word order**	53.3%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	49.8%
3a	**Article omission**	41.7%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	41.7%
3c	**Wrong article use**	41.7%
7a	**Punctuation error**	30.3%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	N/A

Figure 4-7 Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected: IM to Upper-IM Level



When the individual errors' correction rates were compared, it is noticed that the percentages ranged widely depending on the types of errors. Nevertheless, a number of considerably high correction rates can be observed in some categories. The results show, for example, most 'noun related subject/verb disagreement' (96.2%), 'wrong word form' (95.8%) and 'wrong verb tense' (92.9%) errors were pointed out by the teachers. This is followed by 'wrong verb form' (88.1%) and 'spelling error' (80.1%), which also obtained highly constant teacher feedback.

Upper-intermediate to Advanced Level (GE6, CFC & EAP3)

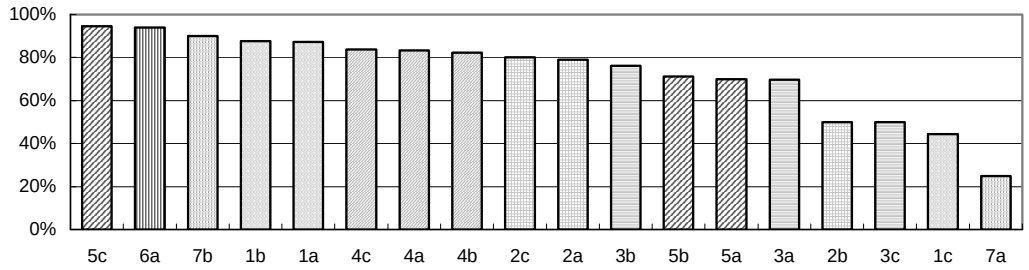
This section will concentrate on the types of errors frequently corrected in the Upper-intermediate to Advanced level. The data obtained from this group are described in Table and Figure 4-8 below. According to the results, it was found that 'unnecessary word/phrase' obtained the highest frequency of error treatment in this group (94.4%). 'Spelling error' and 'capitalisation error' were also consistently checked by the teachers as their correction rates were 93.9 per cent and 90 per cent respectively. In addition to this, 87.7 per cent of 'wrong verb form' and 87.2 per cent of 'wrong verb tense' were corrected by the teachers. The results indicate that there was a tendency for the teachers to correct verb related errors and mechanical errors at a high rate. Furthermore, errors related to word choice also obtained frequent correction.

Table 4-8

Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected: Upper-IM to Advanced Level

Types of learner errors		% of corrected errors
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	94.6%
6a	**Spelling error**	93.9%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	90.0%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	87.7%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	87.2%
4c	**Wrong word form**	83.8%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	83.3%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	82.2%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	80.0%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	79.0%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	76.2%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	71.1%
5a	**Wrong word order**	69.9%
3a	**Article omission**	69.7%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	50.0%
3c	**Wrong article use**	50.0%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	44.4%
7a	**Punctuation error**	24.8%

Figure 4-8 Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected: Upper-IM to Advanced Level



Advanced Level (WWPS)

Finally, the following Table and Figure 4-9 demonstrate the results of the frequently corrected errors obtained from the Advanced level. As previously mentioned, the WWPS course solely represents this highest level group. In this group, 'wrong possessive ending' and 'capitalisation error' were not found; thus, the results of 16 types of errors were examined.

Table 4-9

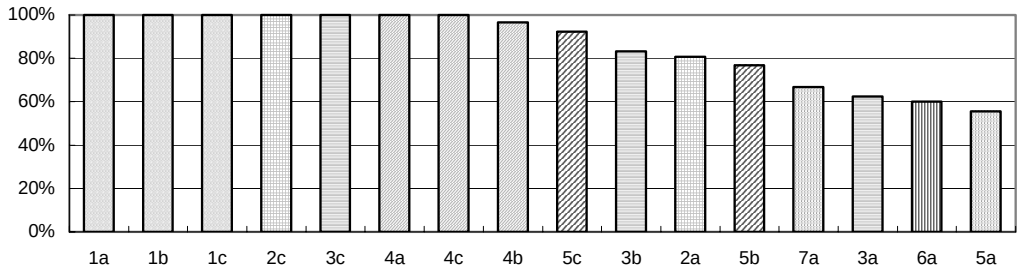
Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected: Advanced Level

Types of learner errors		% of corrected errors
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	100.0%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	100.0%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	100.0%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	100.0%
3c	**Wrong article use**	100.0%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	100.0%
4c	**Wrong word form**	100.0%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	96.7%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	92.3%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	83.3%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	80.6%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	76.9%
7a	**Punctuation error**	66.7%
3a	**Article omission**	62.5%
6a	**Spelling error**	60.0%
5a	**Wrong word order**	55.6%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	N/A
7b	**Capitalisation error**	N/A

According to the results, remarkably high percentages can be observed in some areas. For instance, 'wrong verb tense', 'wrong verb form', both 'verb related and noun related

subject/verb disagreement', 'wrong article use', 'wrong preposition choice' and 'wrong word form' were perfectly corrected by the teacher (100% each). The teacher also corrected the majority of 'wrong vocabulary choice' and 'unnecessary word/phrase (96.7% and 92.3 % respectively). Although there were a number of types of errors with slightly lower correction rates, the majority of the errors produced by the students in this group were pointed out by the teacher regardless of what types of errors they produced.

Figure 4-9 Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected: Advanced Level



4.2.3.2.3 Type of Course

General English Courses (GE3, 4, 5 & 6)

The following Table and Figure 4-10 sum up the data on the corrected errors obtained from the General English courses. In this group, possessive ending errors were not found in the texts; thus, the correction rates for 17 types of errors were examined. The results indicate that there are many types of errors that the teachers corrected at a rate of more than 90 per cent. For example, 94 per cent of 'wrong verb form', 92.9 per cent of 'wrong word form', and also 92.7 per cent of 'unnecessary word/phrase' were corrected. Moreover, a high rate of 'noun related subject/verb disagreement' (92.3%) and 'wrong

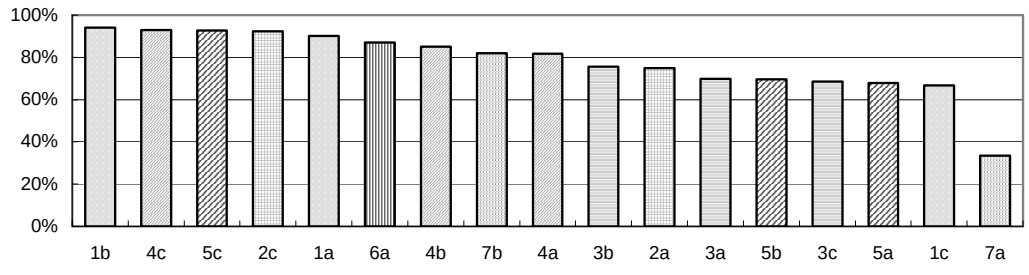
verb tense' (90.1%) were pointed out by the teachers. Seemingly, verb related errors obtained consistent error treatment in this group. Spelling errors were also frequently pointed out by the teachers, at a correction rate of 87.1 per cent.

Table 4-10

Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected: GE Courses

Types of learner errors		% of corrected errors
1b	**Wrong verb form**	94.0%
4c	**Wrong word form**	92.9%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	92.7%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	92.3%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	90.1%
6a	**Spelling error**	87.1%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	85.0%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	82.0%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	81.6%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	75.6%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	74.9%
3a	**Article omission**	69.8%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	69.6%
3c	**Wrong article use**	68.5%
5a	**Wrong word order**	67.7%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	66.7%
7a	**Punctuation error**	33.5%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	N/A

Figure 4-10 Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected: GE Courses



Academic English Courses (EAP1, 3 & WWPS)

Finally, the types of errors that the teachers of the Academic English courses frequently corrected will be presented in Table and Figure 4-11 below. As capitalisation errors were not found in the texts in this group, the correction rates for 17 types of errors were examined.

Table 4-11

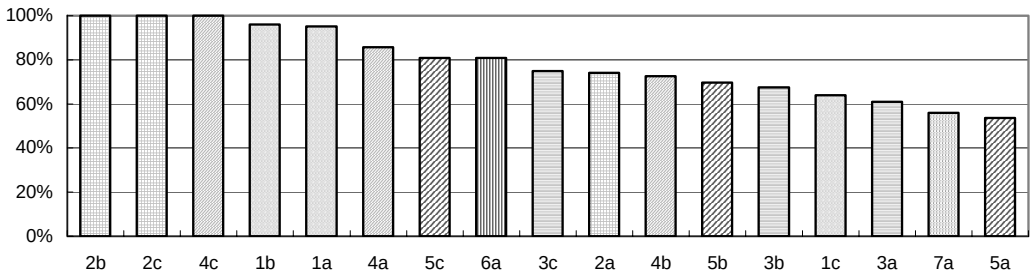
Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected: AE Courses

Types of learner errors		% of corrected errors
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	100.0%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	100.0%
4c	**Wrong word form**	100.0%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	96.0%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	95.2%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	85.7%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	80.8%
6a	**Spelling error**	80.8%
3c	**Wrong article use**	75.0%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	73.9%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	72.5%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	69.6%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	67.5%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	63.9%
3a	**Article omission**	60.9%
7a	**Punctuation error**	55.9%
5a	**Wrong word order**	53.5%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	N/A

The results indicate that ‘wrong possessive ending’ and ‘noun related subject/verb disagreement’ were completely highlighted by the teachers (100% each). Word form errors were also perfectly corrected by the teachers. ‘Wrong verb form’ and ‘wrong verb

tense' also obtained highly constant error treatment, as 96 per cent and 95.2 per cent of these errors were corrected respectively. It seems that errors related to noun ending, related to verb usage and also related to word choice obtained highly constant teacher feedback in this group.

Figure 4-11 Types of Learner Errors Frequently Corrected: AE Courses



4.2.3.3 Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected

4.2.3.3.1 Sample Total

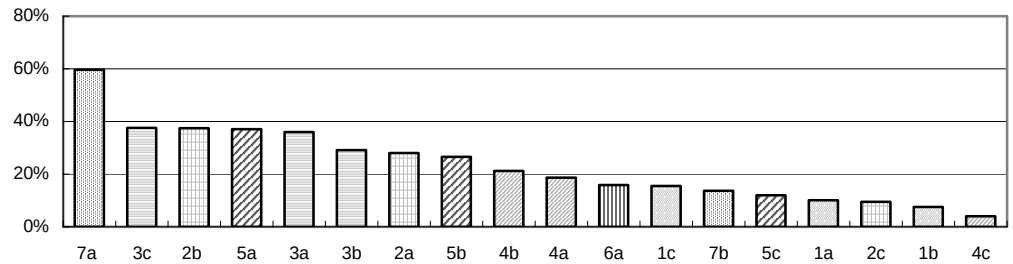
This section will focus on the types of learner errors that the teachers rarely corrected. The presentation of results will start with the results obtained from the sample total mean, and then, the errors obtained from four group levels and two types of courses will be demonstrated individually. The following Table and Figure 4-12 summarise the percentages of uncorrected errors obtained from the sample total mean.

Table 4-12

Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected: Sample Total

Types of learner errors		% of uncorrected errors
7a	**Punctuation error**	59.6%
3c	**Wrong article use**	37.6%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	37.5%
5a	**Wrong word order**	37.1%
3a	**Article omission**	36.0%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	29.1%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	28.1%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	26.6%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	21.2%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	18.7%
6a	**Spelling error**	15.9%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	15.5%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	13.6%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	12.0%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	10.1%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	9.5%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	7.6%
4c	**Wrong word form**	4.0%

Figure 4-12 Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected: Sample Total



According to the results, there are a few types of learner errors that the teachers did not strictly point out. For example, more than a half of the punctuation errors remained uncorrected (59.6%). Moreover, quite a large percentage of the errors in possessive endings and in word order also remained uncorrected (37.5% and 37.1% respectively).

In addition, it is also noticeable that the errors relevant to article usage were generally less frequently corrected by the teachers. The results reveal that 37.6 per cent of 'wrong article use', 36 per cent of 'article omission' and 29.1 per cent of 'unnecessary article' remained without any teacher feedback.

4.2.3.3.2 Level of Course

Pre-intermediate to Intermediate Level (GE3&4)

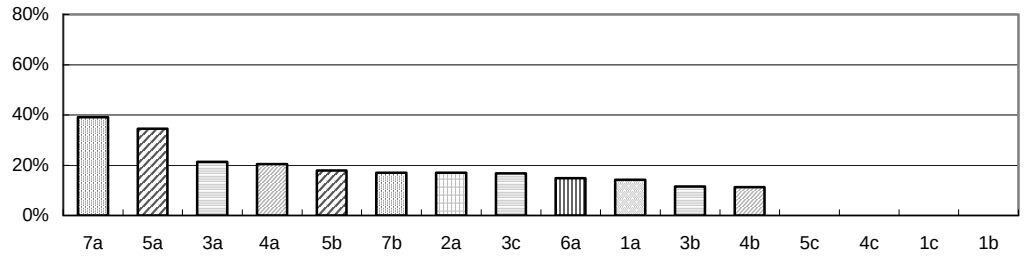
The following Table and Figure 4-13 represent the types of learner errors rarely corrected in the Pre-intermediate to Intermediate level. The results show that approximately 39.1 per cent of punctuation errors and 34.5 per cent of word order errors remained without any teacher feedback. These were the types of errors that were most frequently uncorrected in this group. Following this, article omissions and wrong preposition choices were also left uncorrected in some cases (21.4% and 20.5% respectively). Although these types of errors obtained slightly less teacher attention, the results clearly show that the majority of the inaccuracies were pointed out by the teachers in this group with considerable strictness.

Table 4-13

Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected: Pre-IM to IM Level

Types of learner errors		% of uncorrected errors
7a	**Punctuation error**	39.1%
5a	**Wrong word order**	34.5%
3a	**Article omission**	21.4%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	20.5%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	17.9%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	17.0%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	17.0%
3c	**Wrong article use**	16.7%
6a	**Spelling error**	14.8%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	14.2%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	11.5%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	11.3%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	0%
4c	**Wrong word form**	0%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	0%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	0%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	N/A
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	N/A

Figure 4-13 Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected: Pre-IM to IM Level



Intermediate to Upper-intermediate Level (GE5 & EAP1)

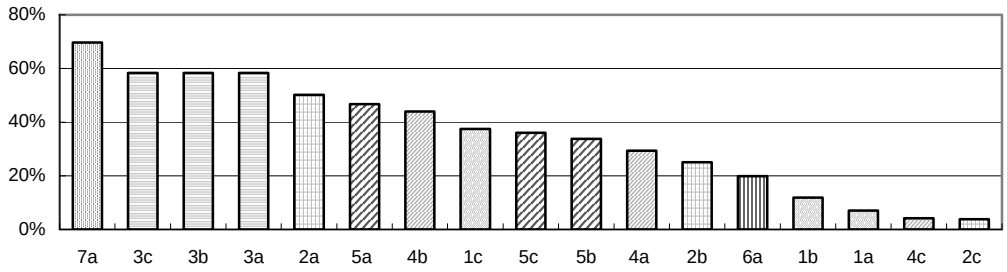
The following Table and Figure 4-14 describe the results of the types of uncorrected errors obtained in the Intermediate to Upper-intermediate level group. The results indicate that a large proportion of punctuation errors remained uncorrected in this group (69.7%). Moreover, more than half of the 'wrong article use', 'unnecessary article' and 'article omission' errors did not obtain teacher feedback (58.3% each). This shows that punctuation errors and article errors were not particularly focused on by the teachers in this group. Other types of errors, such as 'singular/plural error' and 'wrong word order' were also left uncorrected in some cases (50.2% and 46.7% respectively).

Table 4-14

Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected: IM to Upper-IM Level

Types of errors		% of uncorrected errors
7a	**Punctuation error**	69.7%
3c	**Wrong article use**	58.3%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	58.3%
3a	**Article omission**	58.3%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	50.2%
5a	**Wrong word order**	46.7%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	44.0%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	37.5%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	36.1%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	33.8%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	29.3%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	25.0%
6a	**Spelling error**	19.9%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	11.9%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	7.1%
4c	**Wrong word form**	4.2%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	3.8%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	N/A

Figure 4-14 Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected: IM to Upper-IM Level



Upper-intermediate to Advanced Level (GE6, CFC & EAP3)

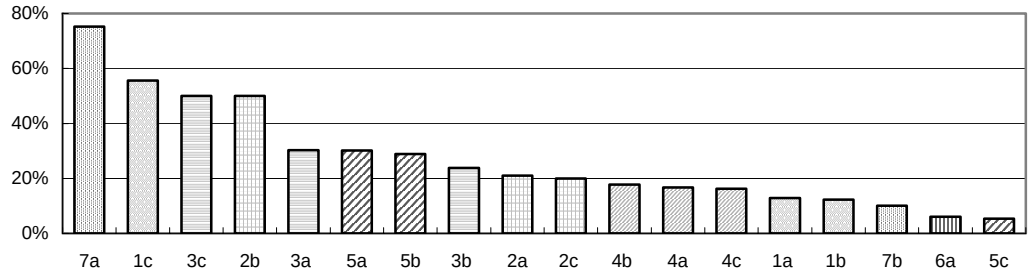
This section will examine the results obtained from the Upper-intermediate to Advanced level. The data obtained from this group are described in Table and Figure 4-15 below. According to the results, it is noticeable that the percentages of uncorrected errors in this group were generally low. Nevertheless, there were a few types of errors that were often did not receive any teacher feedback. For example, 75.2 per cent of punctuation errors remained without correction. Moreover, 55.6 per cent of verb related subject/verb agreement errors were left uncorrected. 'Wrong article choice' and 'wrong possessive ending' could also be considered as less frequently corrected errors, since approximately 50 per cent of those did not obtain teacher correction.

Table 4-15

Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected: Upper-IM to Advanced Level

Types of learner errors		% of uncorrected errors
7a	**Punctuation error**	75.2%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	55.6%
3c	**Wrong article use**	50.0%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	50.0%
3a	**Article omission**	30.3%
5a	**Wrong word order**	30.1%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	28.9%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	23.8%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	21.0%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	20.0%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	17.8%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	16.7%
4c	**Wrong word form**	16.2%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	12.8%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	12.3%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	10.0%
6a	**Spelling error**	6.1%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	5.4%

Figure 4-15 Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected
Upper-IM to Advanced Level



Advanced Level (WWPS)

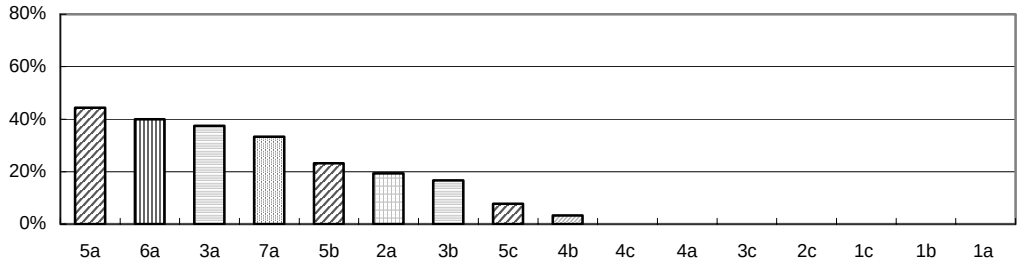
In this section, the data of the uncorrected errors obtained from the Advanced level will be presented. As described in Table and Figure 4-16 below, there were only a few types of learner errors less frequently corrected by the teacher in this group. The highest percentage of uncorrected errors can be found in 'wrong word order' (44.4%). This is followed by spelling errors and article omissions as these errors account for 40% and 37.5% of all uncorrected errors respectively. Punctuation errors were also left uncorrected in some cases; yet, uncorrected errors represent only 33.3 per cent of all errors. Thus, many of them were frequently corrected by the teacher.

Table 4-16

Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected: Advanced Level

Types of learner errors		% of uncorrected errors
5a	**Wrong word order**	44.4%
6a	**Spelling error**	40.0%
3a	**Article omission**	37.5%
7a	**Punctuation error**	33.3%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	23.1%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	19.4%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	16.7%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	7.7%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	3.3%
4c	**Wrong word form**	0%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	0%
3c	**Wrong article use**	0%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	0%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	0%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	0%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	0%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	N/A
7b	**Capitalisation error**	N/A

Figure 4-16 Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected: Advanced Level



4.2.3.3.3 Type of Course

General English Courses (GE3, 4, 5 & 6)

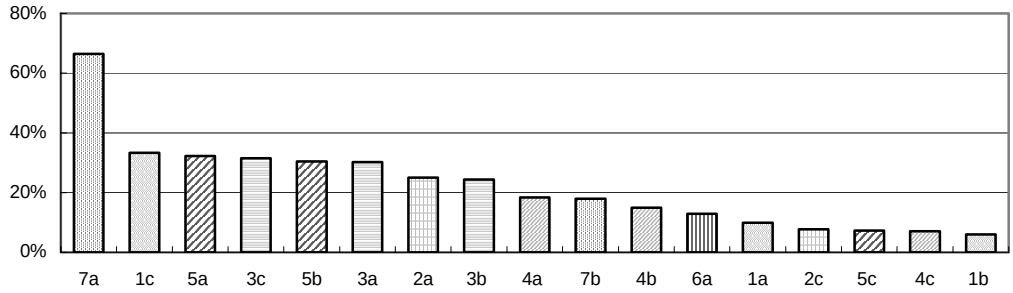
The following Table and Figure 4-17 demonstrate the results of the types of uncorrected errors obtained from the General English courses. Looking at the figures, the type of error that was least frequently pointed out in this group was 'punctuation error', as approximately 66.5 per cent were left uncorrected. Nearly one third of 'verb related subject/verb disagreement' and 'wrong word order' errors also remained uncorrected (33.3% and 32.3% respectively); yet, many of these errors were corrected by the teachers. Whilst the teachers in this group were quite tolerant of punctuation errors, they were generally strict with other types of errors.

Table 4-17

Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected: GE Courses

Types of learner errors		% of uncorrected errors
7a	**Punctuation error**	66.5%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	33.3%
5a	**Wrong word order**	32.3%
3c	**Wrong article use**	31.5%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	30.4%
3a	**Article omission**	30.2%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	25.1%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	24.4%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	18.4%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	18.0%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	15.0%
6a	**Spelling error**	12.9%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	9.9%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	7.7%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	7.3%
4c	**Wrong word form**	7.1%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	6.0%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	N/A

Figure 4-17 Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected: GE Courses



Academic English Courses (EAP1, 3 & WWPS)

Finally, the results of uncorrected errors with regard to the Academic English courses are summarised in Table and Figure 4-18 below. According to the results, the type of

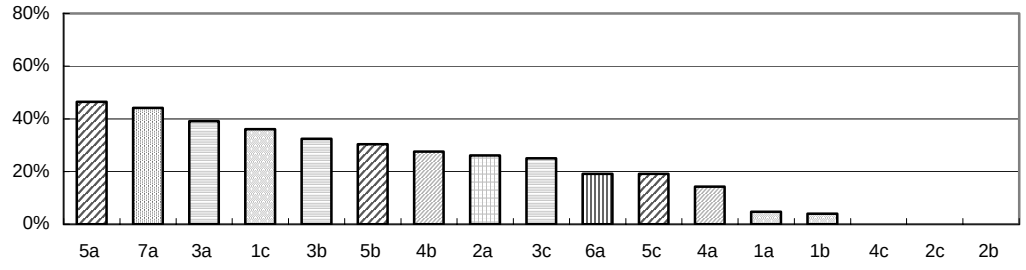
error that was least frequently corrected in this group was ‘wrong word order’, as approximately 46.5 per cent of those errors remained uncorrected. Following this, 44.1 per cent of punctuation errors were also left without correction. Seemingly, article related errors were slightly less often pointed out by the teachers, as 39.1 per cent of ‘article omission’ and 32.5 per cent of ‘unnecessary article’ were not highlighted. Despite the fact that these errors obtained slightly less attention, most types of learner errors were pointed out by the teachers in this group at a constantly high rate.

Table 4-18

Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected: AE Courses

Types of learner errors		% of uncorrected errors
5a	**Wrong word order**	46.5%
7a	**Punctuation error**	44.1%
3a	**Article omission**	39.1%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	36.1%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	32.5%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	30.4%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	27.5%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	26.1%
3c	**Wrong article use**	25.0%
6a	**Spelling error**	19.2%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	19.2%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	14.3%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	4.8%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	4.0%
4c	**Wrong word form**	0%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	0%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	0%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	N/A

Figure 4-18 Types of Learner Errors Rarely Corrected: AE Courses



4.2.4 Overall Degree of Explicitness of Error Treatment Methods

4.2.4.1 Introduction

This section will focus on the types of error treatment methods used by the teachers to deal with learner errors in general. All error treatment methods found in the sample texts were classified into two types on the basis of their degree of explicitness: explicit correction and implicit correction. The former, explicit correction, indicates the method whereby the teachers provide learners exact forms or structures of their errors. On the other hand, the latter, implicit correction, indicates the method whereby the teachers provide corrections indirectly (for a more detailed definition, see Literature Review p.37). Therefore, among four different categories of error treatment methods examined in this research, 'Providing the actual correction' fell into explicit correction, and the other three types – 'Giving a hint', 'Using a correction code' and 'Indicating the location of the error'– fell into implicit correction. The following section will first look at the overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods obtained from the sample total. Then, the data sorted by the level of the course and those of the type of the course will be described separately.

4.2.4.2 Sample Total

Table and Figure 4-19 below summarise the types of error treatment methods each teacher used, and overall ratio of error treatment methods obtained from the sample total. Looking at the total ratio first, it is notable that nearly a half of all error treatment methods used by the teachers were classified into explicit correction (49.1%). On the other hand, implicit correction comprises approximately 50.9 per cent of all error treatment methods on average. The type of implicit correction most commonly used by the teachers was 'Using correction code'; accounting for 35 per cent, followed by 'Location indicators', which represents 13.6 per cent. The method of 'Giving a hint' was rarely used by the teachers as it accounts for a mere 2.3 per cent of all error treatment.

Table 4-19

Overall Degree of Explicitness of ET Methods: Sample Total

	Explicit	Implicit			
	Correction	Hint	Code	Indicator	Total
GE3	18.3%	1.5%	54.7%	25.5%	81.7%
GE4	51.1%	1.2%	47.7%	0%	48.9%
GE5	37.7%	0.5%	32.3%	29.5%	62.3%
GE6	95.3%	0%	0%	4.7%	4.7%
CFC	66.4%	13.1%	18.0%	2.5%	33.6%
EAP1	27.8%	2.7%	51.0%	18.5%	72.2%
EAP3	21.6%	0.8%	63.6%	14.0%	78.4%
WWPS	82.2%	0.5%	4.1%	13.2%	17.8%
Total Ratio	**49.1%**	2.3%	35.0%	13.6%	**50.9%**

Figure 4-19a Overall Degree of Explicitness of ETM: Sample Total

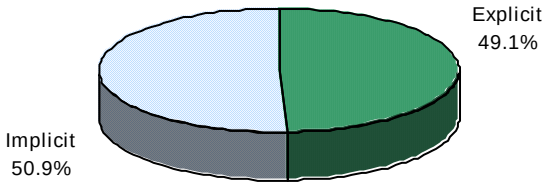
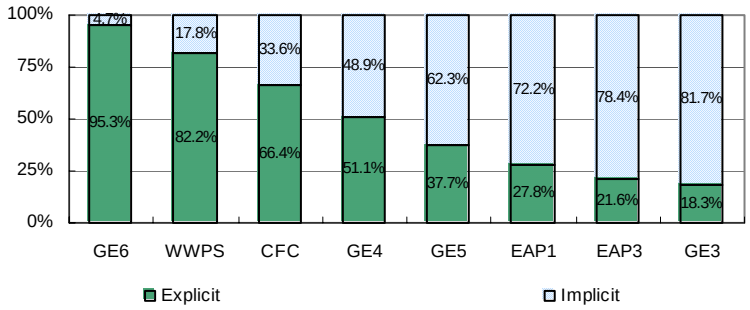


Figure 4-19b Individual Teachers' Degree of Explicitness of ET Methods



Paying attention to the individual teachers' results, as described above, the degree of explicitness of error treatment methods varies widely. The majority of error treatment methods provided in the GE6 course were classified into explicit correction (95.3%). This indicates that the exact forms of the errors were provided to the learners almost all the time when the teacher corrected learner errors. This is also true of the WWPS course, in which the correct forms of the errors were provided by the teachers in 82.2 per cent of the cases. In contrast with this, more implicit correction was used than explicit correction in the EAP1 course (EXC: 27.8% & IMC: 72.2%) and the EAP3 course (EXC: 21.6% & IMC: 78.4%). Furthermore, 81.7 per cent of the error treatment methods used in the GE3 course was determined as implicit correction. In these courses,

coded correction was primarily used by teachers whereas the actual teacher correction was rarely provided.

4.2.4.3 Level of Course

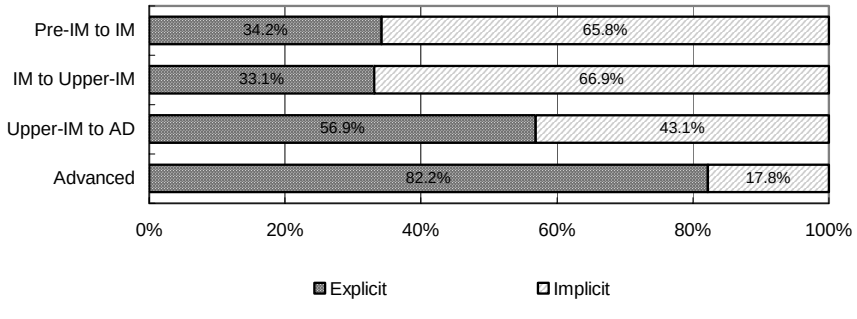
The aggregated data on the degree of explicitness of error treatment methods were sorted according to the levels of the courses. The results obtained from each level are described in Table and Figure 4-20 below.

Table 4-20

Overall Degree of Explicitness of ET Methods: Level of Course

	Explicit	Implicit		
	Correction	Hint	Code	Indicator
Pre-IM to IM	34.2%	1.3%	51.3%	13.2%
IM to Upper-IM	33.1%	1.5%	41.0%	24.4%
Upper-IM to AD	56.9%	4.2%	31.1%	7.8%
Advanced	82.2%	0.5%	4.1%	13.2%

Figure 4-20 Overall Degree of Explicitness of ETM: Level of Course



Interestingly, the percentages of explicit correction increase when the learners' levels become higher. Only one third of error treatment methods used by the teachers in the

lower levels were explicit correction (Pre-IM to IM: 34.2% & IM to Upper-IM: 33.1%). However, the percentages increase to 56.9 per cent in the Upper-Intermediate level and 82.2 per cent in the Advanced level. This indicates that errors produced by the learners in the higher level were more explicitly corrected by the teachers than those in the lower level. As far as the two lower level groups were concerned, the teachers tended to use correction codes or location indicators rather than providing the correct forms.

4.2.4.4 Type of Course

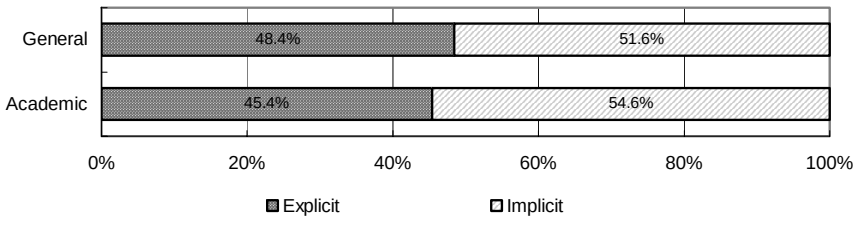
Table and Figure 4-21 below demonstrate the overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods obtained from two groups: General English courses and Academic English courses. The overall results indicate that the average distribution of explicit correction and implicit correction in the two groups were quite similar. In the General English courses, approximately 48.4 per cent of error treatment methods were classified into explicit correction whereas implicit correction comprises 51.6 per cent of those methods. In contrast, 45.4 per cent of correction methods used in the Academic English courses were categorised into explicit correction while implicit correction accounts for 54.6 per cent. Focusing on the implicit types of correction methods, coding correction was popular among the teachers in both groups (GE: 35.8% & AE: 38.6%). In addition, location indicators were also used in both groups in some cases; they represent 15 per cent in the General English courses and 14.8 per cent in the Academic English courses.

Table 4-21

Overall Degree of Explicitness of ET Methods: Type of Course

	Explicit	Implicit		
	Correction	Hint	Code	Indicator
General	48.4%	0.8%	35.8%	15.0%
Academic	45.4%	1.2%	38.6%	14.8%

Figure 4-21 Overall Degree of Explicitness of ETM: Type of Course



4.2.5 Types of Learner Errors and Degree of Explicitness of ET Methods

4.2.5.1 Introduction

This section will concentrate on the relationship between the degree of explicitness of error treatment methods and various types of learner errors. Initially, the description of the types of learner errors that the teachers explicitly corrected will be presented. Then, the results of those implicitly corrected will be demonstrated. In each section, the results of the sample total and those obtained from the various groups will be presented in turn.

4.2.5.2 Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected

4.2.5.2.1 Sample Total

The following Table and Figure 4-22 describe the percentages of explicit correction obtained from the sample total. The results indicate that the type of error that was most

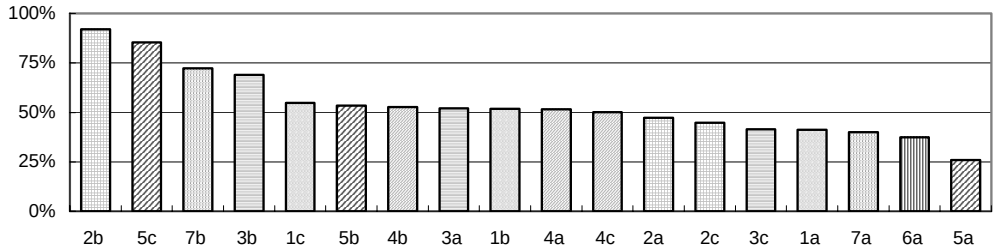
explicitly corrected by the teachers was ‘wrong possessive ending’. In 92 per cent of the cases, the exact forms were provided to the learners. Also determined as explicit correction were 85.3 per cent of correction methods used to correct ‘unnecessary word/phrase’ and 72.2 per cent of those given for ‘capitalisation error’. Moreover, more than two thirds of error treatment methods used for ‘unnecessary article’ were classified into explicit correction (69%). The teachers provided more explicit correction than implicit correction for ‘verb related subject/verb disagreement’ (54.9%), ‘incomplete sentence’ (53.4%) and ‘wrong vocabulary choice’ (52.4%). In other words, both types of correction methods were quite evenly provided for those errors.

Table 4-22

Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected: Sample Total

Types of learner errors		% of explicit correction
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	92.0%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	85.3%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	72.2%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	69.0%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	54.9%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	53.4%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	52.6%
3a	**Article omission**	51.9%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	51.7%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	51.6%
4c	**Wrong word form**	50.2%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	47.2%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	44.7%
3c	**Wrong article use**	41.5%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	41.1%
7a	**Punctuation error**	40.1%
6a	**Spelling error**	37.3%
5a	**Wrong word order**	26.0%

Figure 4-22 Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected: Sample Total



4.2.5.2.2 Level of Course

Pre-intermediate to Intermediate Level (GE3 & GE4)

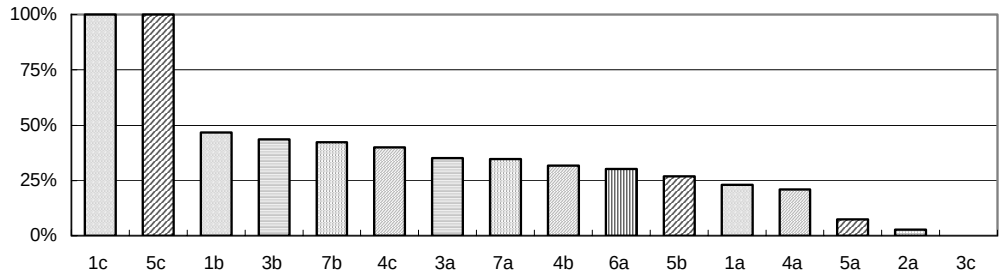
This section will describe the types of learner errors explicitly corrected by the teachers of the Pre-intermediate to Intermediate level. Although the percentages of this method reported in this group are generally low, all error treatment methods used to correct 'verb related subject/verb agreement' and 'unnecessary word/phrase' were explicit (100% each). Thus, the exact forms of the errors were always provided when the teachers highlighted these types of errors. In some cases, 'wrong verb form' (46.7%), 'unnecessary article' (43.5%) and also 'capitalisation error' (42.2%) were explicitly corrected by the teachers; however, these only account for less than a half of all error treatment. These results are summarised in the following Table and Figure 4-23.

Table 4-23

Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected: Pre-IM to IM Level

Types of learner errors		% of explicit correction
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	100.0%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	100.0%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	46.7%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	43.5%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	42.2%
4c	**Wrong word form**	40.0%
3a	**Article omission**	35.2%
7a	**Punctuation error**	34.7%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	31.7%
6a	**Spelling error**	30.2%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	26.8%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	23.1%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	21.0%
5a	**Wrong word order**	7.3%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	2.7%
3c	**Wrong article use**	0%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	N/A
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	N/A

Figure 4-23 Types of Learn Errors Explicitly Corrected: Pre-IM to IM Level



Intermediate to Upper-intermediate Level (GE5 & EAP1)

The types of learner errors that were explicitly corrected in the Intermediate to

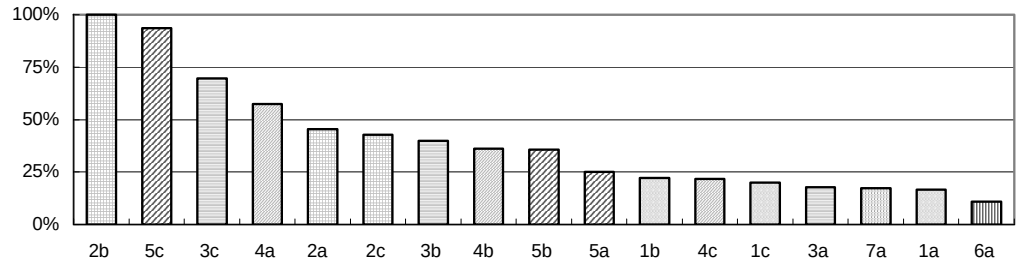
Upper-intermediate level group are summarised in the following Table and Figure 4-24. The results show that there were some types of errors that the teachers often corrected explicitly. For example, all treatment methods used for 'wrong possessive ending' were explicit (100%). Moreover, 93.5 per cent of error treatment methods used for 'unnecessary word/phrase were also classified into explicit correction. This is followed by 'wrong article use' and 'wrong preposition choice', which account for 69.6 per cent and 57.4 per cent respectively. Errors related to noun ending tended to be corrected explicitly.

Table 4-24

Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected: IM to Upper-IM Level

Types of learner errors		% of explicit correction
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	100.0%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	93.5%
3c	**Wrong article use**	69.6%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	57.4%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	45.5%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	42.7%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	40.0%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	36.2%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	35.7%
5a	**Wrong word order**	25.0%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	22.1%
4c	**Wrong word form**	21.7%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	20.0%
3a	**Article omission**	17.8%
7a	**Punctuation error**	17.4%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	16.6%
6a	**Spelling error**	10.8%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	N/A

Figure 4-24 Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected: IM to Upper-IM Level



Upper-intermediate to Advanced Level (GE6, CFC & EAP3)

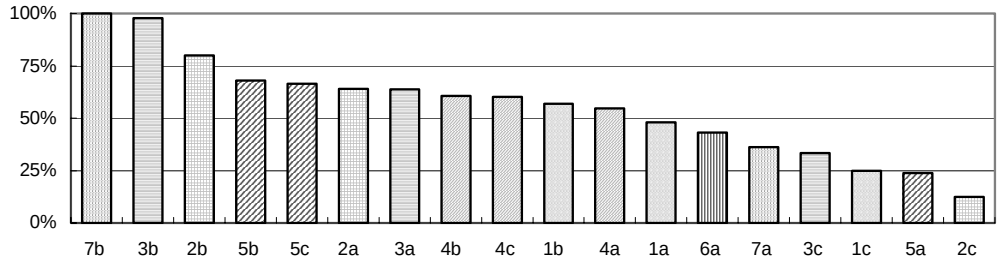
The summary of the data obtained from the examination of explicit correction provided in the Upper-intermediate to Advanced level is presented in Table and Figure 4-25 below. According to the results, all correction methods used for 'capitalisation error' were determined as explicit (100%). 'Unnecessary article' was the second highest, as 97.7 per cent of those errors indicated by the teachers were corrected explicitly. Some errors related to the noun ending, such as 'wrong possessive ending' and 'singular/plural error' were quite often explicitly corrected (80% and 63.8% respectively). Moreover, sentence structural errors, such as 'incomplete sentence' (67.9%) and 'unnecessary word/phrase' (66.5%) were also more explicitly corrected.

Table 4-25

Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected: Upper-IM to Advanced Level

Types of learner errors		% of explicit correction
7b	**Capitalisation error**	100.0%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	97.7%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	80.0%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	67.9%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	66.5%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	63.9%
3a	**Article omission**	63.7%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	60.6%
4c	**Wrong word form**	60.2%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	57.0%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	54.7%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	47.9%
6a	**Spelling error**	43.2%
7a	**Punctuation error**	36.3%
3c	**Wrong article use**	33.3%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	25.0%
5a	**Wrong word order**	23.8%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	12.5%

Figure 4-25 Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected: Upper-IM to Advanced Level



Advanced Level (WWPS)

The results of the percentages of explicit correction provided in the Advanced level group are demonstrated in Table and Figure 4-26 below. In this group, the higher rates

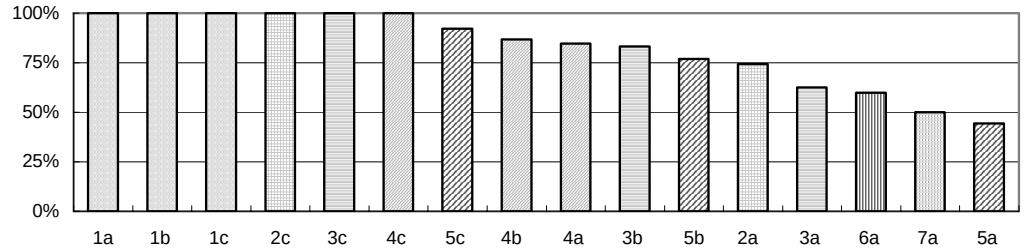
of explicit types of treatment methods can be observed in many categories of errors.

Table 4-26

Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected: Advanced Level

Types of learner errors		% of explicit correction
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	100.0%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	100.0%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	100.0%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	100.0%
3c	**Wrong article use**	100.0%
4c	**Wrong word form**	100.0%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	92.3%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	86.7%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	84.6%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	83.3%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	76.9%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	74.2%
3a	**Article omission**	62.5%
6a	**Spelling error**	60.0%
7a	**Punctuation error**	50.0%
5a	**Wrong word order**	44.4%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	N/A
7b	**Capitalisation error**	N/A

Figure 4-26 Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected: Advanced Level



The results show, for example, all error treatment methods used to correct verb related errors, namely ‘wrong verb tense’, ‘wrong verb form’ and ‘subject/verb disagreement’ were explicit (100% each). In addition to this, 100 per cent of error treatment methods used for ‘noun related subject/verb disagreement’, ‘wrong article use’ and ‘wrong word form’ were also classified into explicit correction. Furthermore, the majority of ‘unnecessary word/phrase (92.3%), ‘wrong vocabulary choice’ (86.7%), ‘wrong preposition choice’ (84.6%) and ‘unnecessary article’ (83.3%) that the teacher pointed out were explicitly corrected. Seemingly, the teacher in this group tended to provide the exact forms of the errors most of the time regardless of the types of errors.

4.2.5.2.3 Type of Course

General English Courses (GE3, 4, 5 & 6)

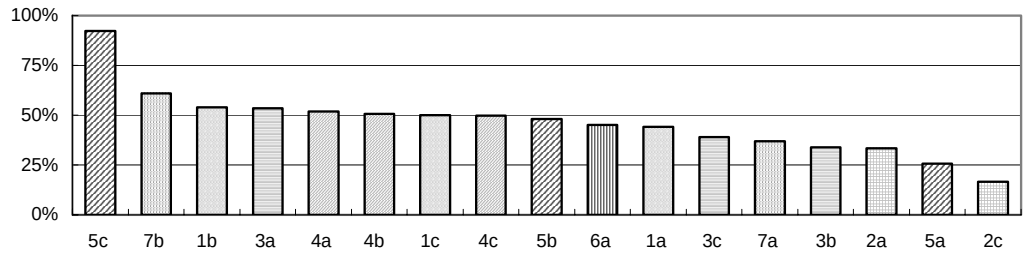
This section will focus on the types of errors explicitly corrected in the General English courses. The following Table and Figure 4-27 demonstrate the results obtained from this group. According to the results, the majority of correction methods used for ‘unnecessary word/phrase’ were explicit types (92.3%). This is followed by ‘capitalisation error’ with the teachers providing the correct forms of the errors in 61 per cent of the cases. Some error treatment methods used for ‘wrong verb form’ (53.9%), ‘article omission’ (53.6%) and ‘wrong preposition choice’ (51.8%) were also classified into explicit correction; however, the percentages were not very high.

Table 4-27

Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected: GE Courses

Types of learner errors		% of explicit correction
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	92.3%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	61.0%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	53.9%
3a	**Article omission**	53.6%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	51.8%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	50.8%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	50.0%
4c	**Wrong word form**	49.8%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	48.1%
6a	**Spelling error**	45.1%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	44.2%
3c	**Wrong article use**	39.1%
7a	**Punctuation error**	37.0%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	33.9%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	33.4%
5a	**Wrong word order**	25.7%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	16.7%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	N/A

Figure 4-27 Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected: GE Courses



Academic English Courses (EAP1, 3 & WWPS)

Finally, the data on the explicit types of error treatment methods obtained from the Academic English courses are summarised in the following Table and Figure 4-28. The

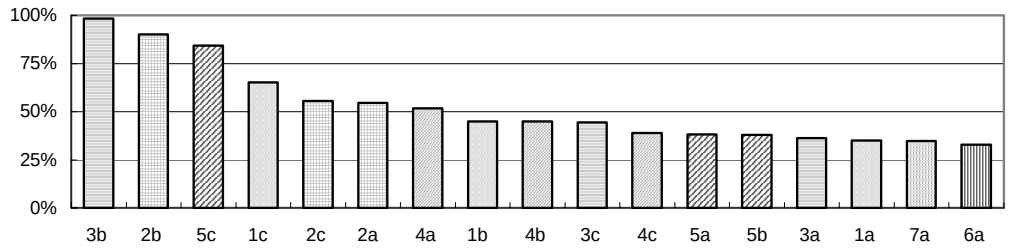
results indicate that the types of learner errors most often explicitly corrected in this group were ‘unnecessary article’ and ‘wrong possessive ending’; these errors represent 98.2 per cent and 90 per cent respectively. Unnecessary words/phrases were also explicitly corrected by the teachers in many cases, as this type accounts for 84.2 per cent. In addition to this, both verb related and noun related subject/verb agreement errors tended to be corrected explicitly; these types of errors comprise 65.2 per cent and 55.6 per cent respectively.

Table 4-28

Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected: AE Courses

Types of learner errors		% of explicit correction
3b	**Unnecessary article**	98.2%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	90.0%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	84.2%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	65.2%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	55.6%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	54.7%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	51.8%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	44.9%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	44.9%
3c	**Wrong article use**	44.4%
4c	**Wrong word form**	38.9%
5a	**Wrong word order**	38.1%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	38.0%
3a	**Article omission**	36.2%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	35.0%
7a	**Punctuation error**	34.9%
6a	**Spelling error**	32.9%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	N/A

Figure 4-28 Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected: AE Courses



4.2.5.3 Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected

4.2.5.3.1 Sample Total

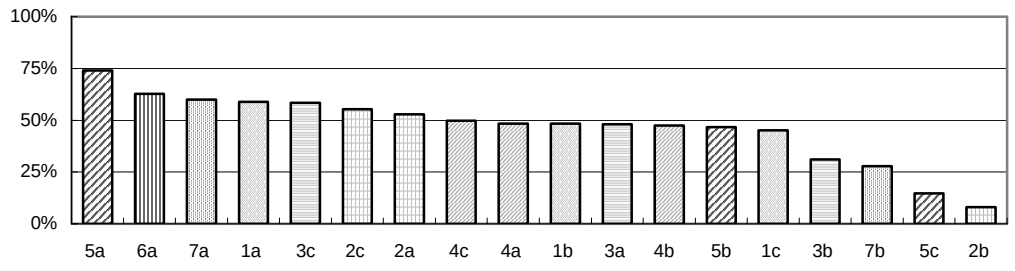
In this section, the types of learner errors the teachers corrected implicitly will be examined. The results obtained from the sample total are described in Table and Figure 4-29 below. According to the figures, the types of errors most implicitly corrected in this group were ‘wrong word order’ and ‘spelling error’. In these categories, implicit correction accounts for 74 per cent and 62.7 per cent of all treatment methods. Following this, ‘punctuation error’ (59.9%), ‘wrong verb tense’ (58.9%) and ‘wrong article use’ (58.5%) were also more implicitly corrected by the teachers. In addition, learner errors related to the noun ending, such as ‘noun related subject/verb disagreement’ and ‘singular/plural error’ were also corrected implicitly in some cases (55.3% and53.8% respectively). There were only seven types of errors that the teachers corrected more implicitly than explicitly (see Table 4-29: top seven categories). This indicates that many types of errors generally obtained more explicit correction.

Table 4-29

Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected: Sample Total

Types of learner errors		% of implicit correction
5a	**Wrong word order**	74.0%
6a	**Spelling error**	62.7%
7a	**Punctuation error**	59.9%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	58.9%
3c	**Wrong article use**	58.5%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	55.3%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	52.8%
4c	**Wrong word form**	49.8%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	48.4%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	48.3%
3a	**Article omission**	48.1%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	47.4%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	46.6%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	45.1%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	31.0%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	27.8%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	14.7%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	8.0%

Figure 4-29 Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected: Sample Total



4.2.5.3.2 Level of Course

Pre-intermediate to Intermediate Level (GE3 & GE4)

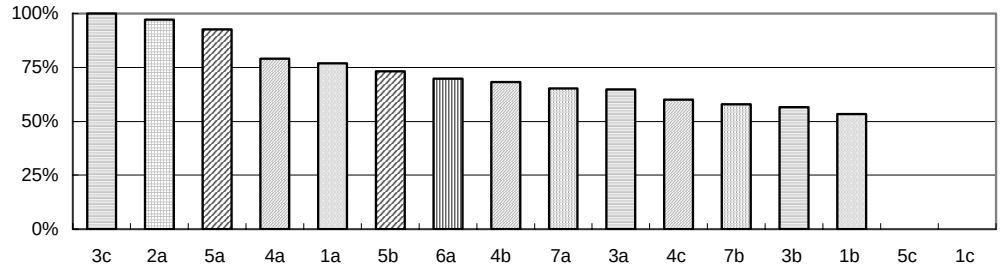
This section will describe the results concerning the implicit types of error treatment methods obtained from four different level groups. Firstly, Table and Figure 4-30 below describe the data of the Pre-intermediate to Intermediate level. At a glance, it is noticed that the many types of errors were mainly corrected implicitly.

Table 4-30

Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected: Pre-IM to IM Level

Types of learner errors		% of implicit correction
3c	**Wrong article use**	100.0%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	97.3%
5a	**Wrong word order**	92.7%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	79.0%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	76.9%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	73.2%
6a	**Spelling error**	69.8%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	68.3%
7a	**Punctuation error**	65.3%
3a	**Article omission**	64.8%
4c	**Wrong word form**	60.0%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	57.8%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	56.5%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	53.3%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	0%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	0%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	N/A
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	N/A

Figure 4-30 Types of Learn Errors Implicitly Corrected: Pre-IM to IM Level



The type of error most implicitly corrected was 'wrong article use', as 100 per cent of the methods used to correct this type of error were classified into implicit correction. This is followed by 'singular/plural error' and 'wrong word order', as implicit correction accounts for 97.3 per cent and 92.7 per cent respectively. In addition to this, nearly three quarters of the methods used for 'wrong preposition choice' (79%), 'wrong verb tense' (76.9%) and 'incomplete sentence' (73.2%) were also recognised as implicit correction.

Intermediate to Upper-intermediate Level (GE5 & EAP1)

Table and Figure 4-31 below summarise the results obtained from the Intermediate to Upper-intermediate level. In this group, a high rate of use of implicit types of treatment methods can be observed in many categories of errors. For example, the majority of the correction methods used for 'spelling error' (89.2%), 'wrong verb tense' (83.4%), 'punctuation error' (82.6%) and also 'article omission' (82.2%) were classified into implicit correction. In addition to this, the percentages of 'verb related subject/verb disagreement' and 'wrong verb form' are also quite high; they account for 80 per cent and 77.9 per cent respectively. Seemingly, mechanical errors and verb usage errors were

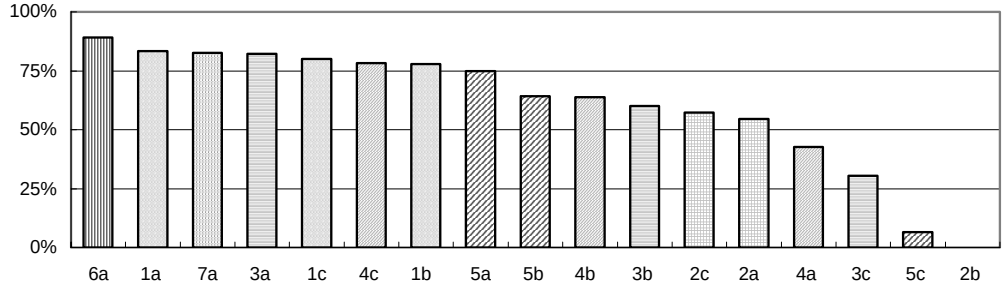
primarily indicated with implicit types of correction methods in this group.

Table 4-31

Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected: IM to Upper-IM Level

Types of learner errors		% of implicit correction
6a	**Spelling error**	89.2%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	83.4%
7a	**Punctuation error**	82.6%
3a	**Article omission**	82.2%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	80.0%
4c	**Wrong word form**	78.3%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	77.9%
5a	**Wrong word order**	75.0%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	64.3%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	63.8%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	60.0%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	57.3%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	54.5%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	42.6%
3c	**Wrong article use**	30.4%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	6.5%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	0%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	N/A

Figure 4-31 Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected: IM to Upper-IM Level



Upper-intermediate to Advanced Level (GE6, CFC & EAP3)

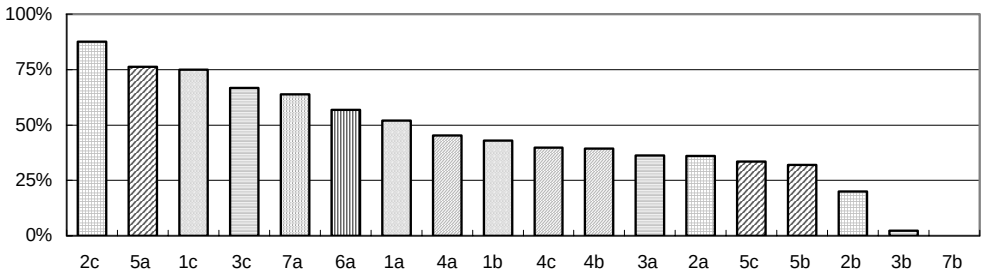
The summary of the data on implicit correction obtained from the Upper-intermediate to Advanced level is presented in the following Table and Figure 4-32. Drawing attention to the higher rates, noun related and verb related subject/verb agreement errors can be observed. These errors were mainly corrected with implicit types of methods, as this method accounts for 87.5 per cent and 75 per cent respectively. The majority of word order errors corrected by the teachers were also implicitly indicated (76.2%). Moreover, 'wrong article use' (66.7%), 'punctuation error' (63.7%) and 'spelling error' (56.8%) were mainly corrected with implicit types of methods.

Table 4-32

Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected: Upper-IM to Advanced Level

Types of learner errors		% of implicit correction
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	87.5%
5a	**Wrong word order**	76.2%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	75.0%
3c	**Wrong article use**	66.7%
7a	**Punctuation error**	63.7%
6a	**Spelling error**	56.8%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	52.1%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	45.3%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	43.0%
4c	**Wrong word form**	39.8%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	39.4%
3a	**Article omission**	36.3%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	36.1%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	33.5%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	32.1%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	20.0%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	2.3%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	0%

Figure 4-32 Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected: Upper-IM to Advanced Level



Advanced Level (WWPS)

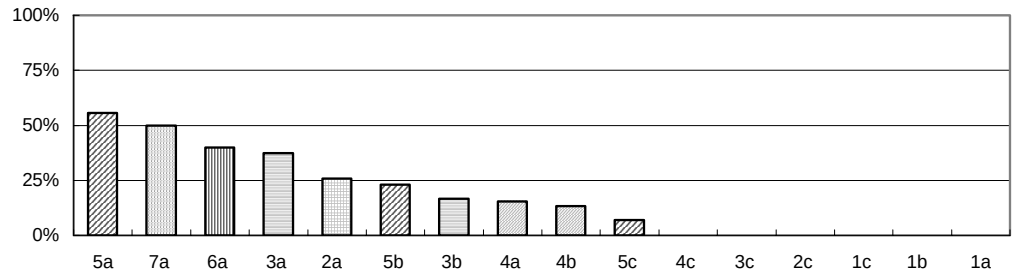
The following Table and Figure 4-33 demonstrate the data on the implicit correction in terms of the Advanced level group. The results indicate that the majority of errors in this group were explicitly corrected; thus only a small number of the errors were indicated by the teachers with implicit types of correction methods. Moreover, 'wrong word order' is the only type of error the teacher corrected more implicitly than explicitly (55.6%). To correct mechanical errors, such as 'punctuation error' and 'spelling error', implicit types of correction methods were used in some cases; however, the percentages were quite low, 50 per cent and 40 per cent respectively.

Table 4-33

Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected: Advanced Level

Types of learner errors		% of implicit correction
5a	**Wrong word order**	55.6%
7a	**Punctuation error**	50.0%
6a	**Spelling error**	40.0%
3a	**Article omission**	37.5%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	25.8%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	23.1%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	16.7%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	15.4%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	13.3%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	7.7%
4c	**Wrong word form**	0%
3c	**Wrong article use**	0%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	0%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	0%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	0%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	0%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	N/A
7b	**Capitalisation error**	N/A

Figure 4-33 Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected: Advanced Level



4.2.5.3.3 Type of Course

General English Courses (GE3, 4, 5 & 6)

This section will focus on the types of errors implicitly corrected in the General English courses. The following Table and Figure 4-34 summarise the results obtained from this group.

Table 4-34

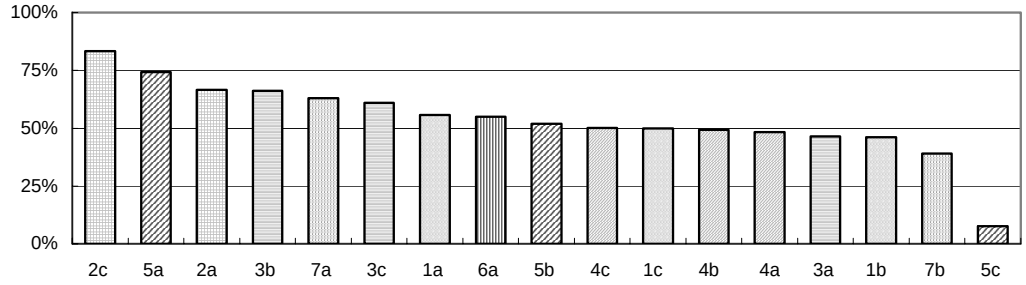
Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected: GE Courses

Types of learner errors		% of implicit correction
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	83.3%
5a	**Wrong word order**	74.3%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	66.6%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	66.1%
7a	**Punctuation error**	63.0%
3c	**Wrong article use**	60.9%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	55.8%
6a	**Spelling error**	54.9%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	51.9%
4c	**Wrong word form**	50.2%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	50.0%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	49.2%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	48.2%
3a	**Article omission**	46.4%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	46.1%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	39.0%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	7.7%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	N/A

In this group, there were many types of errors and the teachers used implicit and explicit correction methods quite equally. However, there are a few types of errors often corrected implicitly. The results show, for instance, the errors related to noun ending

were often indirectly indicated as 83.3 per cent of the correction methods used for 'noun related subject/verb disagreement' and 66.6 per cent of those provided for 'singular/plural error' were classified into implicit correction. Some article errors, such as those unnecessarily used and incorrectly used were also often corrected with this type of method; these errors account for 66.1 per cent and 60.9 per cent respectively.

Figure 4-34 Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected: GE Courses



Academic English Courses (EAP1, 3 & WWPS)

Finally, the types of errors implicitly corrected by the teachers in the Academic English courses will be examined. In this group, the most implicitly corrected error is 'spelling error'; implicit correction accounts for 67.1 per cent of all treatment methods used for this type of error. This is followed by 'punctuation error'; implicit correction comprises 65.1 per cent. From these results, it was found that mechanical errors were often corrected implicitly by the teachers in this group. In addition to this, nearly two thirds of correction methods used for 'wrong verb tense' (65%), 'article omission' (63.8%) and 'incomplete sentence' (62%) were also determined as the implicit types. Moreover, 'wrong word order' and 'wrong word form' also tended to be corrected implicitly as these errors obtained 61.9 per cent, per cent and 61.1 per cent respectively. These results

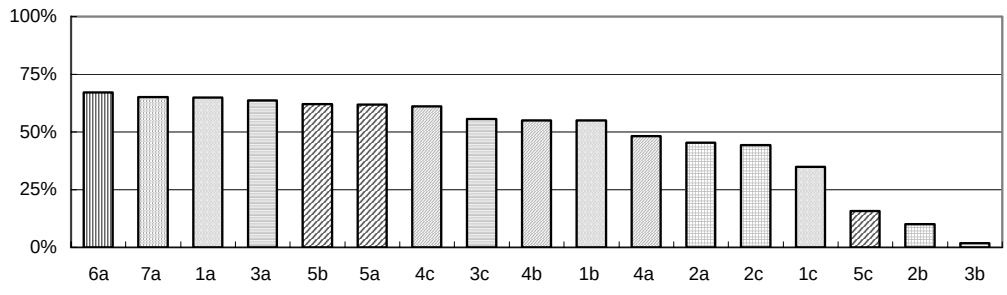
are summarised in the following Table and Figure 4-35.

Table 4-35

Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected: AE Courses

Types of learner errors		% of implicit correction
6a	**Spelling error**	67.1%
7a	**Punctuation error**	65.1%
1a	**Wrong verb tense**	65.0%
3a	**Article omission**	63.8%
5b	**Incomplete sentence**	62.0%
5a	**Wrong word order**	61.9%
4c	**Wrong word form**	61.1%
3c	**Wrong article use**	55.6%
4b	**Wrong vocabulary choice**	55.1%
1b	**Wrong verb form**	55.1%
4a	**Wrong preposition choice**	48.2%
2a	**Singular/plural error**	45.3%
2c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Noun)**	44.4%
1c	**Subject/verb disagreement (Verb)**	34.8%
5c	**Unnecessary word/phrase**	15.8%
2b	**Wrong possessive ending**	10.0%
3b	**Unnecessary article**	1.8%
7b	**Capitalisation error**	N/A

Figure 4-35 Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected: AE Courses



4.2.6 Results of Chi-square Test

4.2.6.1 Introduction

In order to analyse the relationships between the patterns of error treatment and variables statistically, the chi-square test was employed in this research. Initially, the outcomes of the test in terms of the overall frequency of error treatment will be described, and this will be followed by the results with regard to the overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods.

4.2.6.2 Overall Frequency of Error Treatment

The outcomes of the chi-square tests, which indicate the relationship between the overall frequency of error treatment and the variables: (a) level of course and (b) type of course, are presented in Table 4-36 below.

Table 4-36

Results of Chi-square Test: Overall Frequency of Error Treatment

	(a) Level of course	(b) Type of course
Results of χ^2	*15.18	0.24
df	3	2
Critical Value of χ^2 at $\alpha \leq .05$	7.82	3.84

(* = degree of significance)

Interpretation: (a) Level of Course

Reject the null hypothesis: there was a highly significant relationship between the overall frequency of error treatment and the level of the course.

Interpretation: (b) Type of Course

Accept the null hypothesis: there was no significant relationship between the overall frequency of error treatment and the type of the course.

To sum up the results, how frequently the teachers corrected the learner errors was strongly related to the learners' proficiency level in English. However, the type of course –the General English course or Academic English course – seemed not to be a factor for the teachers to decide the frequency of error treatment.

4.2.6.3 Overall Degree of Explicitness of Error Treatment Methods

The chi-square test was also implemented to examine the relationship between the overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods and the variables. Table 4-37 below describes the outcomes of the test, followed by the interpretation.

Table 4-37

Results of Chi-square Test: Overall Degree of Explicitness of ET Methods

	(a) Level of course	(b) Type of course
Results of χ^2	*67.97	0.98
df	3	2
Critical Value of χ^2 at $\alpha \leq .05$	7.82	3.84

(* = degree of significance)

Interpretation: (a) Level of Course

Reject the null hypothesis: there was a very highly significant relationship between the overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods and the level of the course.

Interpretation: (b) Type of Course

> Accept the null hypothesis: there was no significant relationship between the overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods and the type of the course.

To conclude, the results of the test clearly show that the types of error treatment methods the teachers used were significantly different depending on the learners' proficiency level in English but not their purpose of learning. Having considered the above outcomes of the overall frequency of error treatment, the level of course seems to be the important factor to influence the teachers' correction behaviour. However, the type of course did not significantly affect how the teachers dealt with the learner errors.

So far, the results obtained from quantifiable data analysis with regard to the frequency of error treatment as well as the degree of explicitness of error treatment methods have been described. The subsequent section will present the qualitative findings of the teachers' patterns of error treatment practice.

4.3 Description of Error Treatment: Qualitative Findings

4.3.1 Introduction

In order to investigate the teachers' patterns of error treatment more deeply, qualitative data analysis was carried out. This section will first describe the results obtained from the examination of learner errors the teachers frequently corrected. Then, the findings for the types of error treatment methods the teachers used to deal with those errors will be presented.

4.3.2 Characteristics of Learner Errors ESL Teachers Corrected

4.3.2.1 Introduction

Eighteen types of learner errors within seven categories – Verb errors, Noun ending errors, Article errors, Wrong word choices, Sentence structural errors, Spelling errors and Punctuation errors – were further analysed in order to discover any common characteristics. Since it is impossible to have all types of errors subcategorised, some noticeable errors within each category will be presented. Furthermore, it should be noted here that if there is a case where the extracted sentence or phrase contains more than one type of error, the highlighted word or phrase will be focused on and described.

4.3.2.2 Verb Errors

The examples of 'Verb errors', sorted into three groups, 'wrong verb tense', 'wrong verb form' and 'subject/ verb disagreement' are tabulated in the following Table 4-38. The first column shows the learner errors and also the forms that the teacher expected the student to use added in round brackets ( ). The second column presents the course in which the data were obtained.

Table 4-38

Characteristics of Verb Errors the Teachers Corrected

Wrong verb tense	Course
• My parents *lived* in Japan. (live)	GE3
• At that time, I *feel* happy. (felt)	GE3
• You shouldn't wear many colours because this look ordinary. (will look)	GE4
• I *have had* no choice. (had)	GE5
• My school in Brazil *have* already finished last year. (had)	GE5
• I would give to my parents enough money to buy what they want. (wanted)	GE6
• I *have seen* your courses' advertisement last week. (saw)	CFC
• I'll have a class when you'*ll be arriving*. (arrive)	CFC
• Everything *has started* on the day that I entered university. (had started)	CFC
• If the number of vegetarians *is increasing*… (increases)	EAP1
• Disney neither *take* the trend seriously nor *listen* to that objection. (took; listened)	EAP3
• It can tell us *what happened* in other places… (what has happened)	WWPS
Wrong verb form	**Course**
• When I was child I *was learned* a Nihonbuyou. (learned)	GE3
• I usually *going* to bar with my friend. (go)	GE3
• They *have been sold* clothes. (have been selling)	GE3
• Don't *thinking* too much. (think)	GE4
• If you *worry* about your budget… (are worried)	GE4
• I *am studied* in a nun school. (studied)	GE5
• A school *should has* rules. (should have)	GE5
• I would *built* a nice house… (would build)	GE6
• I would spent on to go to Canada (going)	GE6
• He is keen on *collect* the music from the Sydney Opera House (collecting)	CFC
• He *was stood* in front of my classroom. (was standing)	CFC
• The problems of drug using *can solve* by family. (can be solved)	EAP1
• …the young *must be taken* well education. (must take)	EAP1
• He *is earned* 42 cents an hour.… (earned)	EAP3
• Workers who try *forming* unions are normally demoted… (to form)	EAP3
• Communication *has been improved* rapidly… (has improved)	WWPS
• Television *has becoming* a common furniture… (has become)	WWPS
• …only one way of information which doesn't *allows* feedback. (doesn't allow)	WWPS
Subject/verb disagreement	**Course**
• *My father work* hard… (my father works)	GE3
• *Women* usually *wears* short dresses. (women wear)	GE4
• If *someone put* something in your drink… (someone puts)	GE5
• Why *does it* famous? (is it)	GE5
• *Everyone know drug abuse give* a bad effect… (knows; drug abuse gives)	EAP1
• The government of Australia pay attention to the teenagers… (pays)	EAP1
• …what *he make* could not cover the food of the family. (he makes)	EAP3
• The company *have* done nothing… (the company has)	EAP3
• *TV give* us a broad source of information. (TV gives)	WWPS
• Today, *learning become* easier… (learning becomes)	WWPS
• *It allow* people to choose what they want to see… (it allows)	WWPS

Among various types of verb form errors the teachers corrected, errors in active/passive voice were quite noticeable. Corrections for wrong use of gerunds (~ ing) and infinitives were also quite frequently found. Insofar as verb tense errors, such as wrong use of the past tense suffix '-ed', error treatment were constantly provided in most of the courses. Similarly, subject/verb agreement errors, such as omission or unnecessary use of the third person singular suffix '-s' were often corrected by many teachers.

4.3.2.3 Noun Ending Errors

Table 4-39 below describes the examples of 'Noun ending errors'. This type of error was further categorised into three groups, 'singular/plural error', 'wrong possessive ending' and 'noun related subject/verb disagreement'.

Table 4-39

Characteristics of Noun Ending Errors the Teachers Corrected

Singular/plural error	Course
• When I came here I had *some hope* (some hopes)	GE3
• I travel *every weekends*. (every weekend)	GE3
• When *student do* that… (students do)	GE5
• Every school has rules and *some punishment*. (some punishments)	GE5
• They would stay in *5 stars hotels*. (5 star hotels)	GE6
• I would buy a red *sport car*. (sports car)	GE6
• We would not spoil out children and *our life*. (our lives)	GE6
• There are a lot of *equipments*. (equipment)	CFC
• I would like to know some general *informations*. (information)	CFC
• There are *many solution* to solve the problems. (many solutions)	EAP1
• *On the other hands* the situation of family and… (on the other hand)	EAP1
• The workers are paid according to a piece of *rates system*. (rate system)	EAP3
• The reason for *these announcement* are… (these announcements)	EAP3
• We just sit in front of the TV and receive *datas*. (data)	WWPS
• There are *many mediaes* to get the news. (many media)	WWPS

Wrong possessive ending	Course
• The teachers' wanted us to become a good person. (teachers)	GE5
• A I would go to university to do a *master degree*. (master's degree)	GE6
• …human being need to attach importance to *animals's* life. (animals')	EAP1
• *Remi's* has no money left. (Remi has)	EAP3
• NLC wanted to attract *people attention*. (people's attention)	EAP3
Subject-verb disagreement	**Course**
• There are a big campus (There is)	GE5
• *There are* only one punishment (There is)	GE5
• *There are* a computer room. (There is)	CFC
• *The building are* modern and well designed. (the building is)	CFC
• *A good education are* the small step to solve ... (a good education is)	EAP1
• *The difference* between human and animals *are*… (the difference…is)	EAP1
• There are also information on… (there is)	EAP3

Examining the characteristics of 'Noun ending errors' the teachers corrected, it is noticed that simple omission of inflectional morphemes, such as omission of plural suffixes '-s' were noticeable. Unnecessarily added '-s' for uncountable nouns were also corrected in some courses. Errors in possessive ending '-s' and subject/verb agreement, such as wrong choices of 'there is' and 'there are' were quite frequently pointed out by the teachers of the higher level classes.

4.3.2.4 Article Errors

The category of 'Article errors' contains 'article omission', 'unnecessary article' and 'wrong article use'. Table 4-40 below illustrates the characteristics of these article usage errors corrected by the teachers. According to the analysis, it was found that error treatment was frequently provided for the errors where articles were unnecessarily added to zero-article nouns. In addition to this, it was also noticed that corrections provided for article omission and wrong choices of definite article 'a' and 'an' were often found in the lower level classes, whereas those for wrong choices of definite articles and indefinite articles, such as wrong choices of 'a' and 'the' tended to be found

in higher level classes.

Table 4-40

Characteristics of Article Errors the Teachers Corrected

Article omission	**Course**
• My mother is kind and (a) very good house wife.	GE3
• I wanted (a) foreign life.	GE3
• If you wear (a) dress…	GE4
• I am trying to enjoy to (the) maximum.	GE5
• (The) Gold Cost is a safe place.	GE5
• I would save the rest of (the) money.	GE6
• It would really be (a) pleasant surprise.	GE6
• But (the) majority of people in the world still keep (a) meat diet.	EAP1
• It's difficult to choose where you should learn (the) second language.	EAP1
• …workers finish their lunch in (a) few minutes.	EAP3
• Removing the dingoes is not (a) good way.	WWPS
Unnecessary articles	**Course**
• I often listen to the music.	GE3
• You should wear an elegant dress with *a* perfect make-up.	GE4
• I join *the* basketball club.	GE5
• I am *a* from the Netherlands.	CFC
• Studying *the* English in English-speaking countries is…	EAP1
• Children have sent messages to *the* Disney's president…	EAP3
• An organisation that works to protect *the* human rights…	EAP3
• We must make *a* progress.	WWPS
• Television is *a* basic entertainment.	WWPS
• Television is referred to be a simplest way to consume *the* information.	WWPS
Wrong article use	**Course**
• We make a antenna and then… (an)	GE3
• You should wear a elegant dress. (an)	GE4
• I sometimes have heard a excess of punishment. (an)	GE5
• The aim of a campaign was to … (the)	EAP3
• The American organization in favour of... (An)	EAP3
• It is also the good way to learn the history… (a)	WWPS
• Television is the good learning tool. (a)	WWPS

4.3.2.5 Wrong Word Choices

The examples of 'Wrong word choices' the teachers corrected are tabulated in the

following 4-41. The errors in this category vary quite distinctively. Nevertheless, those constantly corrected were found within three groups, 'wrong preposition choice', 'wrong vocabulary choice' and 'wrong word form'. Examining the characteristics of 'Wrong word choices', this category contained two kinds of errors: those grammatically incorrect and those grammatically correct but semantically wrong or awkward. Not only the former type of error, but the latter type was also quite frequently corrected by the teachers.

Table 4-41

Characteristics of Wrong Word Choices the Teachers Corrected

Wrong preposition choice	**Course**
• I was a soldier *during* 26 months. (for)	GE3
• I came here *for* study English. (to)	GE3
• You should be careful to selecting your clothes. (in)	GE4
• The person have to buy chocolat *to* everyone *at* the class. (for; in)	GE5
• I am *on* level 5, which is prety high. (in)	GE5
• I would give some money *for* someone… (to)	GE6
• I would live with the incomes *of* my investments. (from)	GE6
• I'm going to pick you up *in* the airport... (at)	CFC
• I read advertisement *of* your summer language courses. (for)	CFC
• How parents can talk with their children *to* consultation. (through)	EAP1
• They get sacked or put *in* a warning list. (on)	EAP3
• Television provides much useful information *to* everyone everyday. (for)	WWPS
Wrong vocabulary choice	**Course**
• The *sightlook* was beautiful. (sightseeing)	GE3
• I like hotspring very *well*. (much)	GE3
• I'm always *negative* when I first meet a person that I don't know. (quiet)	GE4
• There is a very big campus with all the *structure*… (facilities)	GE5
• Sometimes they *picked us* to the cinema. (took us)	GE5
• If I had such *a big* money… (a lot of)	GE6
• I would ask her to keep this *happening* secret. (event)	GE6
• He never did anything bad to me that could *finish* with our friendship. (end)	CFC
• The dingoes are one of the *famous* wild animals in Australia. (well-known)	WWPS
• Let us *put* the question more closely. (examine)	WWPS

Wrong word form	Course
• The family is very *kindly* and friendly. (kind)	GE3
• …even *more lower* than in our country. (lower)	GE4
• My high school teachers were very friendly and *passionately*. (passionate)	GE5
• My *bad* teacher was the religion. (worst)	GE5
• I usually can't afford to make a *donate*. (donation)	GE6
• Eating vegetarian diet is as *health* as a diet containing meat. (healthy)	EAP1
• Since the modern societies don't give an *important* to the family (importance)	EAP1
• Parents could choose many *educated* programs for their children. (educational)	WWPS

4.3.2.6 Sentence Structural Errors

The following Table 4-42 demonstrates the data obtained from the examination of 'Sentence structural errors' which were further classified into three groups, 'wrong word order', 'incomplete sentence' and 'unnecessary word/phrase'. The results show that incomplete sentences, such as omission of subjects or verbs were frequently corrected by the teachers in the lower level. On the other hand, error treatment provided for unnecessarily added relative clauses was often seen in the higher level classes.

Table 4-42

Characteristics of Sentence Structural Errors the Teachers Corrected

Wrong word order	Course
• There are a lot of *problems, politics and social*. (political and social problems)	GE3
• Also, *is important the clothes colours.* (the colour of the clothes is important)	GE4
• The weather *always is* 28**℃**. (is always)	GE4
• What kind of rules *we must* obey? (must we)	GE5
• The teachers *always were* like friends. (were always)	GE5
• My father desperately was trying to find… (was trying desperately to)	CFC
• Maybe is a good idea a toy like a kangaroo.... (maybe a toy…is a good idea)	CFC
• I would like to know how far *is the school from* the centre of the city. (the school is from)	CFC
• They can *earn only* 30 cents an hour. (only earn)	EAP3
• …but *frequently they get* sacked. (they frequently get)	EAP3
• We can improve our *English learning* by watching… (learning in English)	WWPS
• It is also the goog way to get *the other countries history*. (the history of other countries)	WWPS
• If Government *have culled the dingoes*,… (have the dingoes culled)	WWPS

Incomplete sentence	Course
• I lived (in the) city.	GE3
• Dog's name is *Sunday very cute*. (Sunday. S/he is very cute)	GE3
• In my army life, I learned many things (such as) use of guns…	GE3
• If the school doesn't have it. It's a big problem. (…have it, it's a big problem)	GE5
• Because this ages (it is) easy to learn something.	GE5
• What kind of punishments (are there) in my school?	GE5
• About presents for my family, I can tell you (they) are not necessary.	CFC
• What kinds of sports (do you offer)?	CFC
• I can tell you (they) are not necessary.	CFC
• As more and more people become vegetarian. ('dependent clause')	EAP1
• We should (be) absolutely against the use of drugs to save the young people.	EAP1
Unnecessary word/phrase	**Course**
• It's *look like* a Japanese dance.	GE3
• The things here are *be* all right.	GE5
• My teacher *who* made clear distinction between study and outside class.	GE5
• I would ask my father about *what is* the best way to invest my money.	GE6
• The most important thing which I would have to do *is that* if I won a million dollars is,…	GE6
• We will visit Australia to travel next summer.	CFC
• It depends on *that* what problem *it* is.	EAP1
• Therefore vegetarians *they* do not have deficiency disease.	EAP1
• Just a simple meal cost *is* more than the money *which* he earns.	EAP3
• We can watch it any time *that* we want.	WWPS
• The window of the world *it* is unable to make us feel in a spot.	WWPS

4.3.2.7 Spelling Errors

Many 'Spelling errors' corrected by the teachers seemed to be merely 'a slip of the pen' on the part of the student. Therefore, wrongly spelled words did not have any meanings. However, there were some cases in which misspellings resulted in an actual English word which has a different meaning. According to the results from the further analysis, it was found that these errors were quite consistently corrected by the teachers. The following Table 4-43 describes the examples of these spelling errors the teachers highlighted.

Table 4-43

Characteristics of Spelling Errors the Teachers Corrected

Spelling error resulted in another English word	Course
• My teachers are so *god*. (good)	GE5
• Don't leave the *bad* in your class. (bag)	GE5
• Most of you know that a 9-years old girl is *messed* since last week. (missed)	GE5
• Even knowing *Gold Cost* is a safe place… (Gold Coast)	GE5
• The *left* of my money I would invest… (rest)	GE6
• I look forward to *ear* about you. (hear)	CFC
• It is clean and you can use a *looker.* (locker)	CFC
• Although it is a beautiful place, to buy a *sit* is expensive. (seat)	CFC
• We will save the young *form* the drugs. (from)	EAP1
• The amount of farmer unemployment will rise *to*. (too)	EAP1
• Finally *the* reluctantly agreed to send representative… (they)	EAP3
• …to monitor the subcontracted factories to *insure* human conditions. (ensure)	EAP3

4.3.2.8 Punctuation Errors

Two types of errors in the category of 'Punctuation errors' examined in this research were 'punctuation error' and 'capitalisation errors'. Among the numbers of corrected errors in these categories, some examples are presented in the following Table 4-44. From the examination of the characteristics of 'Punctuation errors', it was found that the majority of errors that the teachers corrected were the omission of commas (,). Particularly, error treatment was quite frequently provided when these commas were omitted after the transitions, such as '*however*' or '*moreover*'. With regard to the capitalisation errors, errors were mainly found in the lower level. This is because this type of error was rarely produced by the students in the higher level classes.

Table 4-44

Characteristics of Punctuation Errors the Teachers Corrected

Punctuation error	Course
• At first (,) for a month (,) I stayed at homestay.	GE3
• If you go to a wending or graduation (,) you should wear a elegant dress.	GE4
• Firstly (,) I would like to know more about the students…	CFC
• The theatre (,) which is located at 5 minutes from the school (,) shows…	CFC
• I am sorry about it (,) but I think my mother can go there instead of me.	CFC
• For example (,) now have a lot companies they made vitamin A, B, C…	EAP1
• However (,) it does not mean humans can kill animals…	EAP1
• With the development of international trade (,) second language becomes…	EAP1
• Moreover (,) he has to pay for the house rental.	EAP3
• Furthermore (,) the Disney claimed that…	EAP3
• There are some kinds of teaching programs on TV (,) such as cooking…	WWPS
• Television is a great way to learn (,) depending on how well it is used.	WWPS
Capitalisation error	**Course**
• I commute to Bond University language institute. (Language Institute)	GE3
• everyday I used telephone. (Everyday)	GE3
• firstly I will begin talking… (Firstly)	GE4
• you shouldn't wear many colours… (You)	GE4
• Although a ferrari is what I always dream of… (Ferrari)	GE6

All in all, the errors produced by the learners were numerous, and their types were widely ranged. Some of them seemed to be considerably serious since they might affect the overall meanings. On the other hand, it was also observed that some errors occurred in isolated sentence elements, and therefore, they did not have any influence on comprehension. Notwithstanding this, it appeared that the teachers were apt to deal with all types of learner errors to a large extent.

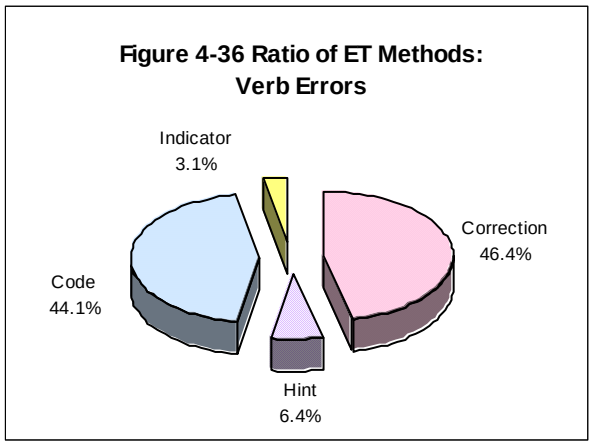
4.3.3 Characteristics of ET Methods ESL Teachers Used

4.3.3.1 Introduction

This section will present the description of the types of error treatment methods used by the teachers. On the basis of the classification of learner errors, the following will be divided into seven sections, and in each section, four different types of treatment methods the teachers actually used will be illustrated separately.

4.3.3.2 Verb Errors

Firstly, this section will focus on the characteristics of error treatment methods used to deal with 'Verb errors'. The overall ratio of verb error treatment described in Figure 4-36 below revealed that all four types of treatment methods were used to correct 'Verb errors', yet, the majority of correction was done with 'Actual correction' (46.4%) or 'Correction code' (44.1%). When the teachers provided the exact models of the errors, the methods varied depending on the individual cases; incorrect verbs were simply reformed in some cases whereas the types of the errors were added with the correct forms in other cases. In addition, the types of abbreviations frequently used for Verb errors were '*vt*' (verb tense), '*t*' (tense), '*wf*' (word form), '*vf*' (verb form), '*gr*' (grammar) and also '*s/v*' (subject/verb agreement). Several examples of verb error treatment are illustrated in the following.



(1-A) Verb error + Actual correction

- **Providing the correct word(s) and the name of the error**

  e.g. *saw (tense)*
  I have seen your courses' advertisement last week. [CFC]

- **Providing the correct word(s)**

  e.g. *had a*
  If I have chance to choice… [GE5]

- **Providing a missing letter(s)**

  e.g. *s*
  It allow people to choose what they want to see… [WWPS]

- **Providing the correct form**

  e.g. *d*
  I would built a nice house… [GE6]

- **Crossing out a superfluous word**

  e.g. I have been worked at hospital. [GE3]

(1-B) Verb error + Hint

- **Asking a question**

  e.g. *When?*
  I am giving my thanks. [GE3]

- **Giving an advice**

  e.g. *Use present tense*
  When you'll be arriving… [CFC]

- **Giving a clue**

  e.g. *stative verb*
  So don't thinking too much. [GE4]

(1-C) Verb error + Correction code

- **Putting an abbreviation**

  e.g. *wf*
  I was life in Australia … [GE3]

  gr
  So choose a good English language program is also possible [EAP1]

  vt
  …most of the children could not go to school. [EAP3]

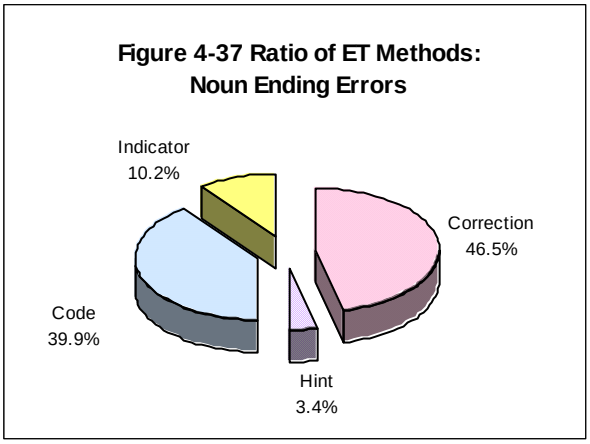
(1-D) Verb error + Location indicator

- **Circling the error**

  e.g. Nomally punishment were to give for parents… [GE5]

4.3.3.3 Noun Ending Errors

Examining the ratio of error treatment methods used to deal with 'Noun ending errors' described in Figure 4-37 below, in 46.5 per cent of the cases the teachers supplied the correct noun endings (i.e. addition or deletion of '-s'). This is followed by 'Correction code', as 39.9 per cent of the noun error treatment fell into this method. Paying further attention to the coded correction, a number of abbreviations, such as '*n*' (numbers) and '*pl*' (plural) were used for this particular type of errors. In addition, some abbreviations used for 'Verb errors', such as '*wf*' (word form), '*gr*' (grammar) and '*s/v*' (subject/verb agreement) were also used for 'Noun ending errors' in other cases. It seems that the classifications of learner errors applied by the teachers varied depending on individual preferences. The characteristics of noun error treatment are summarised below.



(2-A) Noun ending error + Actual correction

- **Providing the correct word(s)**

  e.g. *s are*
  Even the punishment is funny there. [GE5]

- **Providing a missing letter(s)**

  e.g. *s*
  Their parents should give them suggestion. [WWPS]

- **Crossing out a superfluous letter**

  e.g. I would buy a lots of clothes. [GE6]

(2-B) Noun ending error + Hint

- **Giving an advice**

  e.g. *Always singular*
  I would like to know about some general informations. [CFC]

- **Giving a clue**

  e.g. *Subject/verb agreement*
  There are a computer room. [CFC]

(2-C) Noun ending error + Correction code

- **Putting an abbreviation**

  e.g. *n*
  There is a violation of human right. [EAP3]

  -pl.
  We just sit in front of the TV and receive datas. [WWPS]

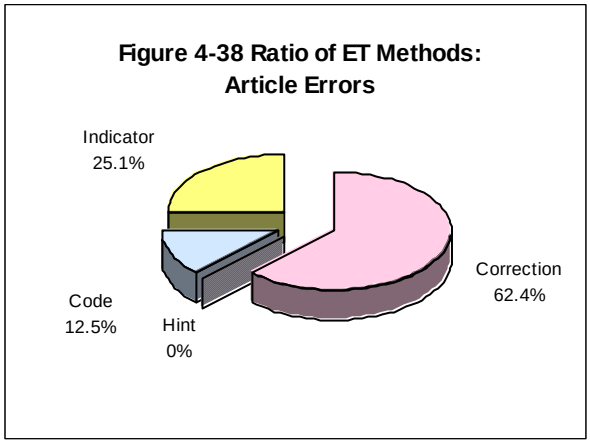
(2-D) Noun ending error + Location indicator

- **Circling the error**

  e.g. I'm going to descrive about high schools. [GE5]

4.3.3.4 Article Errors

According to the ratio of article error treatment illustrated in the Figure 4-38, it was revealed that 'Actual correction' was the method the teachers primarily used to deal with 'Article errors' (62.4%). Examining the characteristics of this type of correction method further, many superfluous articles or determiners were simply crossed out by the



teachers. Interestingly, 'Correction code' was rarely used for Article errors (12.5%) since many teachers inserted an arrow (∧) indicating the locations where the articles or determiners should have been (25.1%) instead of adding abbreviations, such as '*art*' (article). As no 'Hint' was found in the sample texts, the examples of the three types of article error treatment are presented below.

(3-A) Article error + Actual correction

- **Providing the correct word(s)**

  e.g. a
  Television is the good tool for learning [WWPS]

- **Providing a missing word(s) with a location indicator**

  e.g. the
  I would save the rest of money to the poor and sick animals. [GE6]
  ∧

- **Crossing out a superfluous word**

  e.g. I am a from Netherlands. [CFC]

(3-B) Article error + Correction code

- **Putting an abbreviation**

  e.g. art art
  You should wear a elegant dress with a perfect make-up. [GE4]

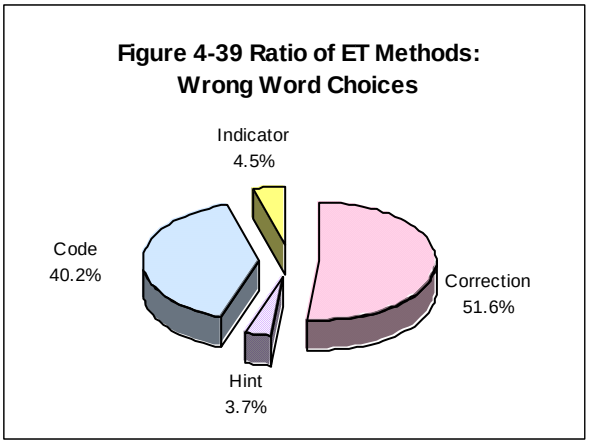
(3-D) Article error + Location indicator

- **Inserting an arrow**

  e.g. My mother is kind and very good housewife. [GE3]
  ∧

4.3.3.5 Wrong Word Choices

The results of the types of word error treatment illustrated in the following Figure 4-39 indicates that the teachers were likely to use 'Actual correction' (51.6%) or 'Correction



code' (40.2%). Analysing the characteristics of these methods, there were many cases in which the teachers gave an alternative vocabulary or a correct word form. With regard to 'Correction code', abbreviations, such as '*prep*' (preposition), '*ww*' (wrong word) and '*wc*' (wrong choice) were quite frequently used for these types of errors. In addition, a question mark '*?*' (confusing) was added when the teachers did not understand what the students intended to write. There were some cases where 'Hint' or 'Location Indicator' were used; however, the numbers were relatively small (3.7% and 4.5% respectively). These characteristics of word error treatment are illustrated below.

(4-A) Wrong word choice + Actual correction

- **Providing the correct word(s)**

  e.g. ***through***
  For example how parents can talk with their children ~~in~~ consultation. [EAP1]

- **Providing the correct form**

  e.g. ***ing***
  You should very carefull in selection your clothes. [GE4]

(4-B) Wrong word choice + Hint

- **Asking a question**

  Who? What?
  They are proud of them. [GE3]

- **Naming the type of the error**

  e.g. ***wrong choice***
  There were prepared crime rules in the cities. [CFC]

(4-C) Wrong word choice + Correction code

- **Putting an abbreviation**

  e.g. *prep*
  Last week I read advertisement <u>of</u> your summer language courses. [CFC]

  ww
  Sometimes they <u>picked</u> us to the cinema or theatre. [GE5]

- **Putting a correction symbol**

  e.g. *?*
  Unless we kill the dingoes, we can be <u>influenced</u>. [WWPS]

(4-D) Wrong word choice + Location indicator

- **Circling the error**

  e.g. My high school teachers were very friendly and passionate(y). [GE5]

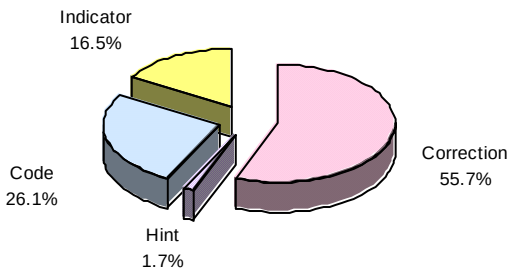
- **Underlining the error**

  e.g. The reason <u>of</u> these announcement is… [EAP3]

4.3.3.6 Sentence Structural Errors

According to the ratio of error treatment methods described in Figure 4-40 below, on the whole, the types of error treatment methods mainly used to deal with 'Sentence structural errors' were 'Actual correction' (55.7%). Looking at the characteristics of this type of treatment method, numerous unnecessary words or phrases crossed out by the teachers were found. Besides that, there were a few cases in which the teachers rewrote the whole phrase or sentence to show the correct sentence construction. In some cases, 'Correction code', such as '*( )*→' or '*wo*' (word order) were used for the errors in word order (26.1%). Moreover, an arrow '∧' was inserted to the places where the

Figure 4-40 Ratio of ET Methods: Sentence Structural Errors



necessary elements, such as subjects or verbs were missing (16.5%). The examples of these types of sentence error treatment are illustrated in the following.

(5-A) Sentence structural error + Actual correction

- **Rewriting a whole sentence/phrase**

  e.g. *the colour of the clothes is important*
  Also is important the clothes colours. [GE4]

- **Providing the correct order**

  e.g. *history of*
  It is also the good way to get the other countries history. [WWPS]

(5-B) Sentence structural error + Hint

- **Naming the type of the error**

  e.g. *Comma splice*
  Thousands of US schoolchildren were impressed by the video, they write… [EAP3]

- **Giving a clue**

  e.g. *dependent clause*
  Because …as more and more people become vegetarian. [EAP1]

(5-C) Sentence structural error + Correction code

- **Putting an abbreviation**

  e.g. *wo*
  We didn't have many places different. [GE5]

- **Putting a correction symbol**

  e.g.
  There are a lot of problem (politics and social). [GE3]

(5-D) Sentence structural error + Location indicator

- **Putting brackets**

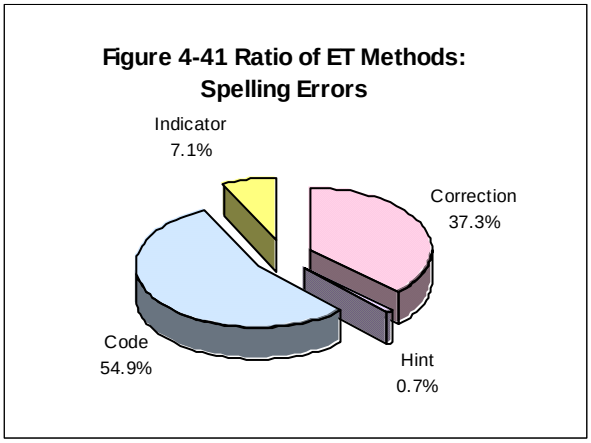
  e.g. I would ask my father about (what is the best way to invest my money. [GE6]

- **Inserting an arrow**

  Because this age easy to learn something. [GE5]

4.3.3.7 Spelling Errors

The following Figure 4-41 demonstrates the ratio of error treatment methods used to correct 'Spelling errors'. The results show that a number of 'Spelling errors' were corrected with 'Correction code' (54.9%), such as '*sp*' or '*s*' (spelling). There were also many cases in which the teachers rewrote the misspelled words or provided the correct letters (37.3%). In contrast, the percentage of 'Location indicator', such as circling used for this type of error was relatively small (7.1%). Moreover, the method of 'Hint' was hardly found in the sample texts (0.7%). A summary of the characteristics of spelling error treatment is shown below.



(6-A) Spelling error + Actual correction

- **Crossing out a superfluous letter(s) / Providing the correct word(s)**

  e.g. ***because***
  I would glade to do that bcauch I won the money by chance… [GE6]

- **Providing a correct letter(s)**

  e.g. ***er n***
  TV give us a broad source of information … entretaiment… [WWPA]

(6-B) Spelling error + Hint

- **Giving an advice**

  e.g. ***Don't break it here***
  They are go to the elem ntary school and kindergarten. [GE3]

(6-C) Spelling error + Correction code

- **Putting an abbreviation**

  e.g. *sp*
  For examplan, it is difficult for people… [EAP1]

  s
  Many motain was conquered by me. [GE3]

(6-D) Spelling error + Location indicator

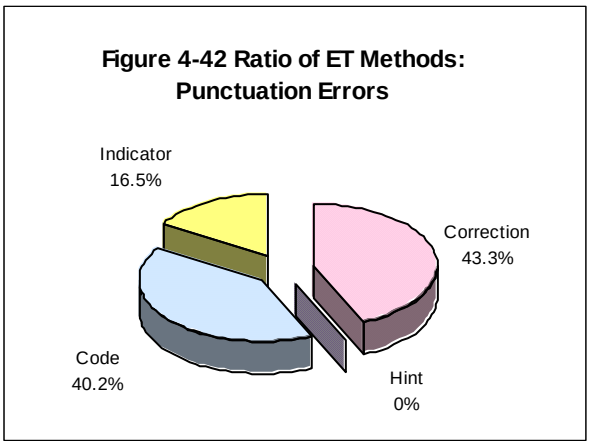
- **Circling the error**

  e.g. It can be good for you. [GE5]

4.3.3.8 Punctuation Errors

Finally, this section will focus on the characteristics of error treatment methods used to deal with 'Punctuation errors'. The ratio of error treatment methods with regard to 'Punctuation errors' indicate that three types of correction methods: 'Actual correction' (43.3%), 'Correction code' (40.1%) and 'Location indicator' (16.5%) were found in the sample texts (see Figure 4-42). Examining the characteristics of these methods further, putting a correction code '*p*' (punctuation) or '*cap*' (capitalisation) was quite a popular technique among the teachers. Additionally, there were some cases where the teachers added the correct punctuation with a correction code. In other words, not only the correct usage but also the type of the error was added into the texts by the teachers. In comparison with these two types of error treatment methods, the overall percentage of 'Location indicator' was representatively small. Nevertheless, circles or underlines

Figure 4-42 Ratio of ET Methods: Punctuation Errors



were likely to be used frequently by a number of teachers. A summary of these characteristics of punctuation error treatment is presented in the following.

(7-A) Punctuation error + Actual correction

- **Providing a missing punctuation**

  e.g. If you are going to informal ocacion **,** you should wear very good. [GE4]

- **Providing the correct capital(s)**

  e.g. *F* *P*
  …I might spend the money on something crazy such as buying a ferrari or porche. [GE6]

(7-C) Punctuation error + Correction code

- **Putting an abbreviation**

  e.g. *Cap*
  first I will begin taking about… [GE4]

  P
  With the development of international trade second language becomes .... [EAP1]

(7-D) Punctuation error + Location indicator

- **Circling the error**

  e.g. Many people from other countries, even, know about the dingoes. [WWPS]

- **Underlining the error**

  e.g. I commute to Bond University language institute every weekday. [GE3]

In this section, the qualitative findings of the characteristics of error treatment methods have been illustrated. Among a variety of correction techniques used by the teachers, coded correction seemed to be quite common rather than other types of implicit correction. Moreover, the cases in which the teachers provided the explicit types of correction were also noticeably observed.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented the results from the current research that examined teachers' patterns of error treatment used to deal with ESL learners' written errors. The first section of this chapter presented quantifiable data in five sections: overall frequency of error treatment, types of learner errors and frequency of error treatment, overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods, types of learner errors and the degree of explicitness of error treatment methods, and finally, the results of the chi-square test. Following the description of quantifiable findings, qualitative data on the types of errors the teachers corrected and also the types of error treatment methods they used were illustrated. These findings of the current research will be interpreted and compared with other related studies in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 5
Interpretation and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter, Interpretation and Discussion, will first attempt to interpret the results of the current research investigating ESL teachers' written error treatment in a specific language teaching context. This interpretation will then be followed by a comparative discussion that will be made on the basis of the current results and those of the previous studies briefly reviewed in Chapter 2, Literature Review. Five major issues to be discussed in this chapter are (1) overall frequency of error treatment, (2) types of learner errors and frequency of error treatment, (3) overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods, (4) types of learner errors and degree of explicitness of error treatment methods and (5) error treatment and course factors. Moreover, the contents will be organised according to the key points raised by the research questions presented in Chapter 3, Methodology and Procedures. After highlighting the relationships between the literature and practice, the final section of this chapter will resolve the possible implications for error treatment in teaching second language writing skills.

5.2 Overall Frequency of Error Treatment

The first issue investigated in the current research was how frequently the teachers corrected the learner errors in general. According to the results, it was revealed that on average 73.5 per cent of all learner errors were identified by the teachers. The individual

teachers' ratios of the corrected errors were generally high, ranging from 58.5 per cent to 87.1 per cent, and fifty per cent of the teachers corrected more than three quarters of the errors produced by their students. These large proportions of the corrected errors clearly indicate that error treatment was frequently provided by the teachers in this particular context.

From the researcher's previous experience as an ESL learner as well as an observing language teacher, high frequency of error treatment was anticipated to some extent. Nevertheless, it was surprising to see the actual numbers of the learner errors the teachers had dealt with. Considering the findings of the EAP3 course, in which the highest frequency of error treatment was reported (87.1%), as an example, in total 357 out of 410 learner errors found in nine sample texts were identified by the teacher. These nine texts were written for the same topic at the same time. In this case, the average number of the errors in each text, which consisted of 389 English words on average, was 45.6, and among them, approximately 40 errors were identified by the teacher in some ways. Even in the EAP1 course where the lowest frequency of error treatment was reported (58.5%), 151 out of 258 errors found in seven sample texts were corrected by the teacher. These results could be interpreted to mean that considerable time had been spent on correcting the learner errors.

In addition to the above findings, another interesting fact was noticed while calculating the data. Among nine teachers primarily examined in this study, only the AWS teacher's frequency of error treatment was exceptionally low (16.9%, see Appendix 4). Consequently, the results of this course were regarded as a highly untypical pattern of

error treatment and thus excluded when the sample mean was obtained (for more detailed explanation, see Chapter 3, p.65). The underlying factor to the low error treatment predicted by the AWS teacher was due to the fact that the teacher often provided summarised comments at the end of student writings (e.g. '*Your ideas are good, but you need to work on grammar, singular/plural & spelling.*') but rarely pointed out the in-text errors. It should be worth mentioning here that this teacher had just completed her teacher training whilst the other eight teachers had quite a lot of teaching experience and tended to correct individual errors but rarely provided end-comments. This finding could, therefore, suggest that the experienced teachers mainly focused on correcting in-text errors. In other words, these teachers were greatly concerned with sentence level accuracy rather than content.

These results were consistent with what Applebee found out in his earlier study conducted in 1981. According to Applebee, despite the recent trend of process-focused approach, many teachers are still interested in language correctness (cited in Fathman & Whalley, 1990). Karavas-Doukas (1995) describes those teachers' error correction behaviour as following an 'audiolingual' approach to error treatment. More recently, Hyland's 2003 study demonstrated that linguistic accuracy was a very important focus of error correction, and the teachers still maintained the use of form-focused feedback. Similar findings are also reported by other researchers, such as Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990), Robb, Ross and Shortreed (1986) and Zamel (1985), who all agree that ESL teachers are still concerned with accuracy in forms and spend a great deal of time on correcting learner errors.

In 1992, Sheppard described that "[i]n the past, many teachers took a discrete item, surface-level approach to errors by, for example, correcting an error themselves or indicating its types (by means of a code) and/or location on the text" (p.103). It has been more than a decade since their studies were conducted. Nevertheless, what happens in actual language classrooms in terms of written error treatment has not changed so far. In other words, despite the current emphasis on communicative language teaching, many teachers still closely follow the traditional approach to error treatment.

As discussed in Chapter 2, there are some potential benefits for adult L2 learners who learn the language through a formal learning style. Since adult learners' L2 learning is different from children' first language acquisition (Hammerly, 1991; Zhongganggao, 2001), adult learners require error treatment or negative feedback in order to "narrow down the range of possible hypotheses that they have formulated from the input to which they have been exposed" (Wen, 1999, p.2). Having considered the learners in Bond University's ESL courses, it is therefore postulated that error treatment could play an important role to enhance their learning. However, one should not forget that overcorrection provided by teachers could cause some negative backwash.

Researchers who advocate the negative aspects of error treatment argue that constant correction of errors not only discourages learners but also significantly harms the complexity of their writing (see Kepner, 1991; Semke, 1984; Shepard, 1992; Truscott, 1996). Kubota's 2001 study found that when the students tried self-correction with the teachers' clues, they tended to delete the sentences which contained errors or to replace "sophisticated words with simpler words" (p.478). Kubota further warns that in order to

improve accuracy, the students sacrifice their creativity. Therefore, it is highly possible that strict correction of learner errors could be counter-productive in that it may influence students to conduct severe self-editing. If error treatment makes learners write shorter sentences or use simpler vocabulary, and discourages them to challenge more complex writing, the amount of time and effort the teachers spend on correcting learner errors in the first round of error corrections could be wasted.

According to Hammerly (1991), if error treatment is provided systematically by teachers through one hypothesis at a time, adult learners can examine hypotheses more effectively. In short, error treatment which focuses on certain aspects of errors would be more effective. One of the reasons behind this is that if teachers meticulously highlight numerous errors at a time, learners do not remember all of them because in many cases, as Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) claim, the learners simply make a mental note of teacher correction instead of revising or rewriting the papers. It means that they only glance at corrected errors briefly (Dickson, 1995; Lewis, 2002; Raimes, 1991). Since the current research did not examine individual teachers' beliefs or attitudes toward error treatment, it is difficult to have a clear understanding of why the teachers' frequency of error treatment was so high. At this stage, therefore, one could only speculate some possible reasons for this significant gap between what theories suggest and what has been carried out in actual language classrooms.

Firstly, the learners' beliefs in language learning might have influenced the teachers' correction behaviour. Numerous researchers suggest that many language learners want their teachers to correct all errors they produce as they tend to believe the goal of

language learning is to be able to use the language perfectly (see Cathcart & Olsen, 1976; Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1995a; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; 1996; Leki, 1991; Makino, 1993; Oladejo, 1993; Radecki & Swales, 1988). Consequently, learners in general place a considerably high value upon error treatment (Ferris, 1995a). Similarly, the results from Peacock's 1998 study conducted in a Hong Kong university as well as Nunan's 1988 study in an Australian context show that the learners preferred more traditional-type activities, such as grammar learning or error correction than communicative-type activities. More specifically, Malczewska-Webb's 1993 study, which investigated teachers' and learners' beliefs about the perceived usefulness of language learning activities, reveals that the ESL learners at Bond University perceived the traditional activities as very useful although their teachers did not. If the learners examined in the current study had the same perceptions toward language learning, it would be possible to state that they had strong preferences for error treatment.

In addition to the above, the majority of the ESL learners at Bond University come from Asian countries, such as Japan, China or Korea, where English teaching is primarily conducted by non-native English speaking teachers. According to Rusek (1994), a considerable amount of empirical evidence demonstrates that non-native English speaking teachers are less tolerant and harsher critics of learner errors than native English speaking teachers. Taking this into account, one could assume that the learners who came from those countries were probably used to being corrected by teachers. Furthermore, they might have a belief that one of the teachers' main roles is correcting their errors. In such a teaching/learning context, it is impossible for the teachers to

abandon correcting learner errors even if they have some doubts about its effectiveness. As Ferris (1999) asserts, the reason for this is that the absence of correction may frustrate and demotivate learners. The teachers, therefore, might have been under pressure from the learners' expectations and obligatorily corrected errors in order to enhance learner motivation (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Lee, 1997; Lewis, 2002; Makino, 1993).

Secondly, the teachers' experience and beliefs in language teaching might have affected the outcome of the current study. According to Kepner (1991), many L2 teachers still maintain the traditional view that the goal of L2 writing is to be able to produce accurate writings. Therefore, it is their duty to correct errors and to help learners acquire surface skills. Similarly, Ferris (1995a) states that teachers themselves believe that providing error treatment is crucial. This view would probably arise from the assumption that if learner errors remained uncorrected, they might be permanently ingrained into the learners' language repertoire (Hammerly, 1991; Major, 1988; Raimes, 1991; Semke, 1984). If the teachers examined in this study believed that correcting errors was an indispensable teacher role to prevent such error fossilisation, it is understandable why they persistently provided error treatment. Alternatively, the teachers might have simply judged their performance as 'the more correction on learners' writings, better the teachers' (Hairston, 1986).

In either case, the teachers seemed to have a responsibility to point out the errors in order to enhance language learning. However, the question raised is that if the teachers cannot abandon correcting learner errors, why do some of them remain uncorrected? In

Leki's (1990, p.61) summary of the findings of Zamel's earlier study conducted in 1985, she noted that "the annotations of ESL writing teachers are apparently intended to catch every error the students make, and that despite that intention, the teachers miss errors...". In essence, it is unclear whether the teachers were unaware of those errors or they were aware of the errors but consciously ignored them. Therefore, further research is required to investigate the reasons of disregard on an individual basis.

5.3 Types of LE and Frequency of Error Treatment

In order to find out the types of learner errors the teachers particularly focused on, the current research also investigated the frequency of error treatment in terms of eighteen types of learner errors. According to the results, it was found that the learner errors highlighted by the teachers were more or less found in all eighteen categories of the errors. This could be interpreted that the teachers corrected a wide variety of the errors. However, despite the tendency for the teachers to be over-preoccupied with accuracy, the current results strongly suggest that the frequency of error treatment was significantly different depending on the types of learner errors.

To recall the detailed data, the types of learner errors frequently corrected by the teachers were 'wrong word form' (96%), 'wrong verb form' (92.4%) and 'noun related subject/verb disagreement' (90.5%). This was followed by 'wrong verb tense' (89.9%), 'unnecessary word/phrase' (88%), 'capitalisation error' (86.5%), 'verb related subject/verb agreement errors' (84.5%) and 'spelling errors' (84.1%). Apart from 'unnecessary word/phrase', these errors could be categorised into three groups

depending on the common features: the errors related to a part of speech, those related to verb usage including subject/verb agreement and also those in mechanics. This outcome partly concurred with what Fregeau (1999) found in her study conducted in the ESL courses at the University of South Alabama. Fregeau examined the teachers' written responses to the learner compositions and found that the types of errors most frequently corrected by the teachers were verb tense errors and misspellings. Fregeau did not mention the exact percentages of the corrected errors or any reasons for the high frequency of teacher responses given to these errors. Nevertheless, she emphasised that such surface correction was the most common technique used in L2 writing courses. Considering the similar results obtained from two different teaching contexts, one could assume that ESL teachers correct various types of surface errors; yet, they pay more attention to certain aspects of the language when they respond to students' writings.

Keeping these findings in mind, the focus will now shift to the types of learner errors that the teachers rarely corrected. The results indicated that 'punctuation error' was rated as the least frequently corrected types of error since the correction rate was only 40.4 per cent and more than a half of the errors remained uncorrected. Compared with the highly frequent correction provided for other mechanical errors (i.e. 'spelling error' and 'capitalisation error'), the proportion of punctuation errors corrected by the teachers was remarkably low. For example, only 10 out of 46 punctuation errors were corrected in the CFC course. Also, 5 out of 41 punctuation errors were corrected in the GE5 courses. Furthermore, among 29 punctuation errors found in the GE6 course, none of them were corrected by the teacher. In fact, no punctuation errors produced by the eighteen students in the different courses were corrected by their teachers. From these

results, it would be possible to consider that the teachers did not pay clear attention to punctuation errors in many cases when they corrected student writings.

In addition to the punctuation errors, there were several types of errors that the teachers sometimes left uncorrected. Results showed that the correction rates of ‘wrong possessive ending’ and ‘wrong word order’ were slightly lower (62.5% and 62.9% respectively). Moreover, ‘wrong article use’ (62.4%), ‘article omission’ (64%) and ‘unnecessary article’ (70.9%) were also ranked as less frequently corrected errors. Apparently, the teachers tended to be tolerant of article related errors. This tendency was especially found in the GE5 and EAP1 courses in which less than a half of all article errors found in these courses remained uncorrected. Therefore, the teachers of the Intermediate to Upper-intermediate level had a considerably high degree of acceptance toward article errors.

Bartman and Walton (1991) state that certain types of learner errors have high priorities for error treatment because these errors are more important than the others. As the errors in word form, verb usage, spelling and capitalisation were frequently corrected in this research, it could be considered that these errors were prioritised by the teachers. However, the issue that has to be considered here is the reason why these types of errors were particularly focused on. As has been mentioned in Chapter 2, errors related to the pedagogical focus, those error that occur frequently and those that hinder communication have been suggested by the researchers to decide what errors to correct. In the next section, the relationship between those theoretical suggestions and practice will be discussed.

Firstly, a variety of student writings were collected and examined in this research, it could be considered that the purposes of writing activities carried out in each course were different. For instance, the students in the GE3 course freely wrote about their weekend whereas those in the GE6 course did controlled writings to practice the second conditionals. Also, the students in the WWPS course wrote argumentative essays for diagnostic purposes. In spite of the different objectives of the lessons, however, no significant difference in terms of frequently corrected errors was found. Taking word form errors as an example, the errors were perfectly corrected in all three courses (100% each). Although Nunan and Lamb (1996) and Wen (1999) suggest that learner errors relevant to the objectives of the lesson should be prioritised for error treatment, the results of the current study did not prove any relationship between error treatment and the objectives of the lessons.

Secondly, researchers, such as Ferris and Roberts (2001) and Vann *et al*. (1984) state that verb errors or spelling errors are often considered as the common errors found in ESL learners' writings. Lalande (1982) and Mings (1993) claim that learners' frequent errors should be corrected first. Therefore, if verb errors or spelling errors were frequently produced by the learners at Bond University, the reason why so much teacher attention was paid to these errors would be understandable. However, drawing attention to the types of learner errors found in this research, some inconsistencies arose. Looking at the ratio of each type of learner error, as shown in Table and Figure 4-4 (p.74) in the presentation chapter, 'Verb errors' and 'Spelling errors' comprised only 10.7 per cent and 7.4 per cent of all learner errors on the whole. This suggests that verb related errors and spelling errors were ranked as the least frequently produced errors. Nevertheless,

those errors received considerably strict correction. On the other hand, punctuation and article errors were more frequently produced by the students but less attention was paid to them. Consequently, the types of errors the teachers frequently corrected were not particularly related to the errors the learners frequently produced.

Finally, the qualitative findings of the characteristics of frequently corrected errors revealed that word form errors the teachers frequently corrected were wrong use of adjectives, adverbs or nouns. With regard to the corrected verb errors, omissions of inflections, such as a suffix '-s' or '-ed' were noticeable. Also, as far as mechanical errors are concerned, errors constantly highlighted by the teachers were the use of small letters to the proper nouns and simple misspellings, namely 'slip of a pen' errors. In reference to the classification of the learner errors introduced by some researchers (for example, see Hammerly, 1991; Lewis, 2002; Raimes, 1991), these types of errors could be recognised as '*local errors*', which indicate isolated sentence elements. Many researchers state that these aspects of grammatical deviations might make sentence structures awkward, yet, they do influence the overall comprehension of the message (see Croft, 1980; Hendrickson, 1980; Lewis, 2002; Raimes, 1991; Walz, 1982).

Hammerly (1991) suggests that if teachers are faced with numerous learner errors, '*local errors*' should be ignored and only global aspects of grammar should be corrected. Therefore, the outcome of the research did not correlate with what has been suggested. Karavas-Doukas' 1995 study claimed that "[a]lthough most teachers were aware of the fact that the errors impeding communication were most serious they still felt it was necessary to correct all student errors" (p.11). This, however, is not always the case.

Leki (1990, p.61) in summarising Zamel's (1985) findings has said that "sometimes minor errors are corrected and much more significant problems causing serious ambiguity in meaning go uncorrected". These findings indicate a significant contradiction between what theory suggests and actual error treatment practice.

In the final analysis, regrettably, it has not been clearly understood whether certain aspects of surface errors were consciously selected by the teachers or they corrected these errors frequently because these aspects of deviations were easy to correct. In fact, the errors frequently corrected by the teachers tended to be rule-governed errors, which have exact rules and it is easier to notice the deviation from the correct usage. At this stage, therefore, one could only make tentative assumptions and further investigation is necessary in order to have a clear understanding of the relationship between the frequency of error treatment and the types of learner errors.

5.4 Overall Degree of Explicitness of ET Methods

The third issue to be discussed is what degree of explicitness of treatment methods the teachers use to deal with learner errors. According to the results, the overall ratio of explicit and implicit correction was 49.1 per cent and 50.9 per cent respectively. Therefore, both types of methods were quite evenly used by the teachers on average. This indicated that in nearly half of the cases, the teachers did not provide the exact correct forms of the errors but did provide some clues indirectly in order to encourage the learners' self-correction. These findings are in accordance with those of Major (1988), who reports that a combination use of overt and covert types of correction

methods was a commonly used technique in his study. Hendrickson (1984, p.149) suggests that “indirect and direct correction treatments can be more effective if they are used together in hybrid fashion”. This idea comes from the fact that the use of various types of treatment methods would be more successful than relying on one type of method (Lynch, 1996, cited in Muncie, 2000). Therefore, as far as the average results are concerned, actual error treatment practice seems to correspond to those theoretical assumptions.

In this research, all error treatment methods the teachers used were further classified into four categories. To recall the results, ‘Actual correction’ obtained the highest rate (49.1%), which was followed by ‘Correction code’ (35%), ‘Location indicator’ (13.6%) and ‘Hint’ (2.3%). Consequently, ‘Providing the actual correction’ was the most common technique used by the teachers to deal with learner errors. A similar finding was reported by Oladejo (1993) in that providing correct answers was the most poplar error treatment method used by language teachers. A number of other researchers (for example, see Allwright, 1982; Hendrickson, 1980) also found that teachers had a strong preference for explicit correction. According to the individual teachers’ degree of explicitness of error treatment methods, four out of eight teachers used ‘Actual correction’ as their main method (see Table and Figure 4-19, pp.98-99). Among these teachers, two of them also used some implicit types of correction methods whereas the teachers of the GE6 and WWPS courses predominantly used explicit types of methods, namely ‘Actual correction’. To illustrate, there were 106 corrected errors found in the GE6 course, and the number of the errors the teacher provided explicit correction for was 101 (95.3%). As far as the WWPS course is concerned, 162 out of 197 error

treatment methods used by the teacher fell into this type (82.2%). This clearly indicated that the exact forms of the errors were almost always provided in these two courses. In other words, the learners could immediately know the correct usage when they received their writings back no matter what types of errors they produced.

Apart from the above explicit correction, 'Using a correction code' was also commonly used by the teachers to deal with learner errors. In contrast, two other types of implicit correction methods, 'Location indicator' and 'Hint', were far less frequently used. Cumming (1985) states that error identification or location indicators, such as circling or underlining were the most widely used correction techniques (cited in Saito, 1994). Therefore, contrasting results were obtained. It could be considered that the reason for these outcomes is that although the teachers encourage self-correction, they might think that merely indicating the location of the errors, such as underlining or circling would not give enough information to the learners. Moreover, writing some hints aimed at the individual errors would be more time-consuming than using correction codes. In fact, the qualitative results showed that the method of 'Hint' provided by the teachers could be further subdivided into the following three categories: 'giving the name of the errors' (e.g. '*wrong choice*'), 'giving an advice' (e.g. '*Use past tense*') or 'giving a clue' (e.g. '*subject/verb agreement*'). Therefore, most of these comments could be substituted by 'Correction code', such as '*wc*', '*vt*' or '*s/v*'. According to Sheppard (1992), with the correction codes including symbols and abbreviations, teachers can indicate both the types of errors and the location of errors. Also, Ihde in 1994 states that such a coding system can help teachers to reduce their labour for correction (cited in Ryder, 1997). Coded correction, as opposed to writing a hint or comment, could avoid covering the

students' writings with red markings. Having considered the usefulness of coded correction, thus, it is no wonder why this method was highly preferred by the teachers. In fact, this method has been recommended in many teaching manuals (see Harmer, 2001; Tribble, 1996).

The current results revealed that to a greater or lesser extent, code correction was used by the majority of the teachers. However, despite the common use of this technique, some inconsistencies were found among their codes. Firstly, the results indicated that the types of correction codes used by the teachers varied considerably. Examining the abbreviations used to correct verb related errors as an example, '*t*' (tense), '*vt*' (verb tense), '*vf*' (verb form), '*vc*' (verb choice), '*wc*' (wrong choice), '*ww*' (wrong word), '*wf*' (word form), '*g*' (grammar), '*gr*' (grammar), '*s/v*' (subject/verb agreement) were found. As some of these were also used for other types of errors, it is assumed that the classification of learner errors employed by each teacher was significantly different. Therefore, such variance might cause learner confusion with regard to understanding teacher feedback. Secondly, there were a few cases in which the methods of correction in one student's example of writing had clearly changed from coded correction to actual correction. This means that even though error treatment was started with correction codes, the teachers changed their methods to provide the actual forms of the errors in a later stage regardless of the types of errors. As a result of this, sometimes the same types of errors produced by the same student were corrected differently. Subjective observation suggests that the degree of explicitness of error treatment carried out on an individual paper seemed to increase as the marking reached the end of the paper.

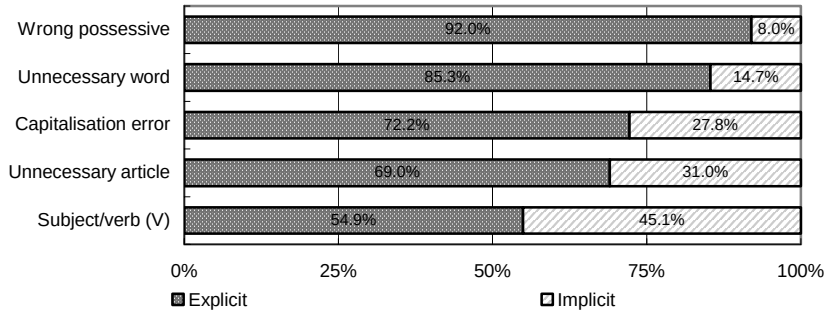
Other researchers, such as Ferris (1995), state the relevant point that several problems arise if teachers rely too much on coded correction. In 1995, Ferris examined students' reactions to teacher responses in their writings and reported that some students mentioned the problems of specific grammatical terms (e.g. '*fragment*' or '*verb tense*') or abbreviations the teachers used. Zamal (1985) asserts that teacher comments like '*word form*' do not help learners understand their problems. Likewise, Moxley (1989) claims that students do not understand how to use correction codes. The study carried out by Lee (1997, p.465) suggests that "students have limited understanding of grammatical terms commonly used in a correction code". Therefore, even though coded correction is a useful technique, it has to be handled with great care; otherwise, it might place an extra burden upon learners to decode.

Numerous examples of empirical evidence show that a coding system is not pre-eminently effective when it is compared with other types of implicit correction methods. The study conducted by Ferris and Roberts in 2001, which compared the effects of correction codes, reveals that "there were no significant differences between the 'codes' and 'no-codes' groups" (p.161) in terms of the students' writing performance. With this result, they conclude that less explicit correction suffices to help the students to carry out self-correction. Similar results were reported by Robb *et al.*'s study in 1986 that examined the effects of four different types of error treatment methods (cited in Polio, 1997). Consequently, one could possibly state that providing less time-consuming treatment methods, such as location indicators might be sufficient and more efficient than relying on correction codes.

5.5 Types of LE and Degree of Explicitness of ET Methods

This section will investigate the relationship between the types of learner errors and the degree of explicitness of error treatment methods. According to the results, it was found that the types of treatment methods the teachers used were clearly different depending on the types of errors. To begin with, the following Figure 5-1 shows the top five errors that the teachers corrected explicitly.

Figure 5-1 Types of Learner Errors Explicitly Corrected: Extreme Results

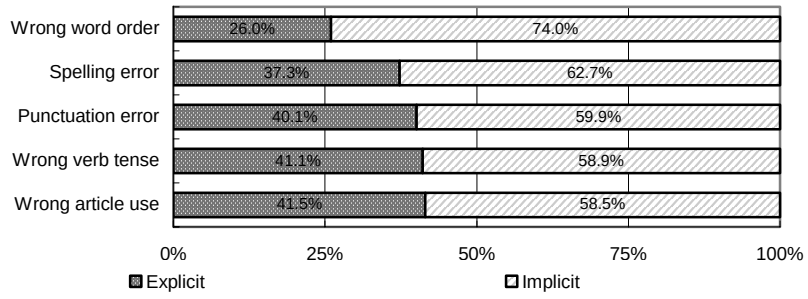


Examining the above types of learner errors, 'wrong possessive ending', 'capitalisation', 'unnecessary article' and 'verb related subject/verb disagreement' were considered to be rule-governed errors whereas only 'unnecessary word/phrase' was a non rule-governed error. Therefore, it was noticed that many explicitly corrected types of errors were unquestionable errors. For example, the majority of possessive ending errors were simply crossed out by the teachers or an apostrophe with 's' (-'s) was added. Moreover, the proper nouns which started with a small letter were also often crossed out and then the correct large letter was added. Similar patterns were found with correct subject/verb agreement errors as well. Lee (1997, p.468) states that "errors are not all the same for

students because some errors are easier to correct than others". Interestingly, the types of errors the teachers provided explicit correction for were considered to be quite easy mistakes, which the students could probably correct on their own using teachers' hints or some materials. Nevertheless, the teachers tended to rewrite the correct forms of the inaccuracies. This could be interpreted to mean that the teachers also found these errors easy to correct.

In contrast, next, Figure 5-2 below presents the top five errors most implicitly corrected by the teachers.

Figure 5-2 Types of Learner Errors Implicitly Corrected: Extreme Results



As described in the figure above, the type of error most implicitly corrected was 'wrong word order'. This was an unexpected result as word choice errors were considered to be non rule-governed errors. The qualitative results revealed that many of word order errors the teachers corrected were coded with an abbreviation '*wo*' or '*( )→*'; therefore, the cases in which the teachers actually provided the correct order of the words or phrases were hardly found. Apart from 'wrong word order', 'spelling errors', 'punctuation errors', 'wrong verb tense' and 'wrong article use' were all rule-governed

errors. Therefore, it was clear that the teachers encouraged self-correction in many cases, because the learners were supposed to be capable of correcting these errors by themselves.

The theorists and empirical findings consistently suggest that implicit correction suffices for dealing with unquestionable errors, such as grammatical errors and mechanical errors called surface errors (see Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1999; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hammerly, 1991; Haswell, 1983; Lalande, 1982; Robb *et al.*, 1986). The types of errors, such as those in spelling, punctuation, verb tense, noun related subject/verb agreement and also singular/plural found in the current research were mainly corrected implicitly. Therefore, the results concurred with what has been suggested. In contrast, in the current study, many word order errors were indicated with an arrow '*( )→*', which was categorised into implicit correction although the literature suggests that explicit correction should be provided for this type of error. This gap between practice and theory is possibly due to a difference in classification practices. In Hendrickson's (1984) study, this type of method is defined as detailed correction as it can tell the proper places of the errors. Therefore, this variance of the classifications might influence the outcome of this study. If it had been classified into 'explicit correction' in this research, the opposite result might have been found.

Researchers, such as Ferris (1999) emphasise that implicit correction is more effective than explicit correction for surface errors. Since those errors are rule-governed, learners can correct their own errors with some materials, such as grammar books or dictionaries. Conducting such self-correction helps learners to memorise their mistakes and the

correct elements or structures cognitively (Hammerly, 1991). Furthermore, this technique can promote learner autonomy since learners have to be more responsible for their learning. Hammerly further states that learners cannot learn anything if they merely act in a passive role. In other words, they cannot improve their writing skills if they only copy the correct forms provided by their teachers (for more detailed discussion for the roles of implicit correction, see the literature review section). In fact, several empirical research findings demonstrate that learners are capable of correcting the errors by themselves. For example, Dickson reported in 1995 that with the correction signals provided by the teacher, the students were able to find the solutions for their errors quite easily, and nearly eighty per cent of those were successfully self-corrected. Also, Haswell (1983) claimed that his students were able to correct sixty to seventy per cent of their errors with the error indications in the margin. In a similar way, more recently, Ferris and Roberts (2001) found that the students were able to revise sixty per cent of errors that were simply underlined by their teachers. Therefore, these findings suggest even indicating the location of the errors could be enough to deal with surface errors.

In addition to the above findings, there is another interesting fact worth mentioning here. Based on research (for example, see Ferris, 1999; Myers, 1997), the initial assumption made by the researcher was that ‘incomplete sentence’ and ‘wrong vocabulary choice’ were mainly corrected with explicit types of methods. However, the current results revealed that the proportions of implicit correction used for these errors were relatively high (46.6% and 47.4% respectively). The results, thus, suggest that in nearly half of the cases, these errors were implicitly indicated by the teachers. In other words, the learners

were expected to find the correct words or forms by themselves in such cases.

Ferris (1999) claims that it is inadequate to provide implicit correction for non rule-governed errors. She continues that errors in word choice and those in verb tense should not be corrected in the same way, like '*wc*' (word choice) and '*vt*' (verb tense), since the former types have no reference or rule to consult while the latter types have. As previously mentioned, Lee (1997) points out that some errors are more easily corrected than others. In other words, certain types of errors are difficult for learners to correct by themselves. In fact, wrong word choices and sentence structural errors were ranked as the most frequently produced errors in this study. From this result, therefore, one could speculate that these were the most difficult aspects of the language for the learners. Myers (1997) suggests that teachers should directly supply the words or phrases to learners as soon as possible just like they unhesitatingly provide them in a stream of spoken discourse. In spite of the considerable usefulness of implicit correction, it seems explicit correction for certain types of errors could provide learners opportunities to acquire the correct usage without any frustration. This is due to the fact that discovering the appropriate structures or words could be an extremely difficult task for learners (Kubota, 2001). In effect, a balance between implicit correction and explicit correction might be the best means of enhancing the quality of writing.

5.6 Error Treatment and Course Factors

This section will focus on the issue of how factors influenced the teachers' patterns of error treatment. In the current research, the teacher samples were sorted into groups

based on the proficiency levels and the types of the courses they were teaching. The quantifiable data compiled from each group were compared to find out if there were any similarities and differences, and then, the chi-square tests were carried out to determine the significant level of the difference statistically. The section will present the interpretation and discussion of the results in the following order: (1) Level of course and (2) Type of course. Each section will contain the results with regard to the overall frequency of error treatment and the overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods. Some minor, yet interesting findings will then be presented in the final section.

5.6.1 Level of Course

This section will consider the research question concerning the relationship between error treatment and the level of the course. In the first place, it will compare the results of the overall frequency of error treatment obtained from four different groups: Pre-intermediate to Intermediate level, Intermediate to Upper-intermediate level, Upper-intermediate to Advanced level and also Advanced level. According to the results, 84.2 per cent of the learner errors found in the highest level group were corrected, whereas a slightly smaller percentage was reported in the lowest level group (81.8%). In terms of the other two medium level groups, the percentages decreased further; 62.8 per cent in the Intermediate to Upper-intermediate level and 71.6 per cent in the Upper-intermediate to Advanced level respectively (see Table and Figure 4-2, p.72). Therefore, it was obvious that the overall frequency of error treatment varied depending on the learners' proficiency levels. This was also demonstrated by the outcome of the chi-square test (χ^2 = 15.18 at $\alpha \leq .05$, df = 3), which indicated a highly significant

difference among the groups (see Table 4-36, p.124).

When it comes to the relationship between the frequency of error treatment and the students' level of proficiency, however, it is, in fact, difficult to make a clear interpretation of the current results. Apart from the Pre-intermediate to Intermediate level group, there was a definite indication that the frequency of error treatment increased with the level of the course. In other words, the learner errors produced by the higher level groups generally obtained more teacher correction. However, considerably high correction rate reported from the lowest level group should not be ignored. The errors found in this group were as frequently corrected as those found in the highest level group. Consequently, the second lowest level group ranked as the least frequently corrected group in this particular case.

Although only a small amount of the literature is concerned with the relationship between error treatment and learners' level of target language proficiency, some researchers suggest that accuracy and fluency should be well-balanced depending on learner level. For example, the following statement is found in Oladejo (1993, p.85).

> [I]t has been suggested that grammatical errors should be given less attention, especially in the performance of beginning learners, while communicative errors should be of more importance in order to ensure that such learners attain some level of confidence in communicating in the target language.

In addition, Eskey (1983) claims that a minimum communicative competence is not enough for advanced learners as these learners are more likely to be required to achieve

a greater degree of accuracy in the target language. Therefore, as recommended by Bell (1992), error treatment might be more important and necessary to learners in the higher levels than those in the lower levels.

With the above findings in mind, next, the overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods will be examined. When the results obtained from the four levels were compared, it was found that the types of error treatment methods used in each group were extremely different. The outcome of the chi-square test (χ^2 = 67.97 at $\alpha \leq .05$, df = 3) also strongly supported that the difference among the groups was significant in terms of the overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods (see Table 4-37, p.125). The results showed, for example, only one third of corrected errors were explicitly highlighted in the two lower level groups (Pre-IM to IM: 34.2% & IM to Upper-IM: 33.1%). However, it rose up to 56.9 per cent in the Upper-intermediate to Advanced level and 82.2 per cent in the Advanced level (see Table and Figure 4-20, p.100). This clearly indicated that the errors produced by the students in the highest level were more explicitly corrected than those in the lower level. It was very interesting to see that the percentages of explicit correction increased when the learner level became higher.

Several studies found that as learners' proficiency increased, their abilities in self-correction improved (see Hendrickson, 1984; Sakamoto & Koyama, 1997, cited in Kubota, 2001). Similarly, Lee (1997) and Makino (1993) suggest that less detailed correction should be provided for advanced learners because they could be more capable of self-correction. It seems that for learners in lower levels who have limited

linguistic repertoires, explicit teacher correction should be given because it is often difficult for those learners to find solutions to their errors by themselves (Hendrickson, 1984). Considering the above evidence, it is obvious that the outcome of the current research strikingly contradicts what has been suggested. The reasons for these contrasting findings will be discussed later in this chapter.

After examining the overall frequency of error treatment and the degree of explicitness of error treatment methods, it was noticed that the difference among the four groups had became more obvious. In the lowest level, although learner errors were frequently pointed out, they were mainly corrected with implicit types of treatment methods. In contrast, in the highest levels, in which also the majority of learner errors were highlighted, many of them were corrected with explicit types of correction methods. Drawing attention to the Intermediate to Upper-intermediate level, error treatment was less often carried out, and many errors were highlighted implicitly. From these results, it would be possible to state that the teachers in the higher levels took more time to correct learner errors on average since they provided detailed correction to many learner errors. On the other hand, it seems less time was taken for error treatment in the Intermediate to Upper-intermediate level. Consequently, despite the fact that the relationship between the error treatment and the level of the course was not clearly proven, these findings at least suggest that error treatment was somehow differently provided by the teachers in each group. Indeed, further research into why this occurred is necessary.

5.6.2 Type of Course

This section will consider how the type of course, whether the General English courses

or Academic English courses, influenced the teachers' patterns of error treatment. In the first place, the current results revealed that the average correction rate in the General English courses was 73.8 per cent whereas in the Academic English courses, the average rate was 76.6 per cent (See Table and Figure 4-3, p.73). Therefore, the overall frequency of error treatment obtained from the two groups was not very different. The outcome of the chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 0.24$ at $\alpha \leq .05$, $df = 2$) also offered firm evidence to suggest that there was no significant relationship between the overall frequency of error treatment and the type of the course (see Table 4-36, p.124).

As far as the results of the overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods obtained from two groups are concerned, a similar picture was drawn. The percentages of explicit correction in General English courses and Academic English courses were 48.4 per cent and 45.4 per cent respectively. Moreover, no significant difference was found in the distribution of the three implicit types of correction methods between two groups (see Table and Figure 4-21, p.102). The result of the chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 0.98$ at $\alpha \leq .05$, $df = 2$) also demonstrated that there was no relationship between the types of methods the teachers used and the types of the course (see Table 4-37, p.125). These results, therefore, could be understood in that the type of the course was not the most important influencing factor that decided the teachers' error treatment behaviour. In other words, how the teachers dealt with learner errors did not change depending on the learners' purposes of the target language learning.

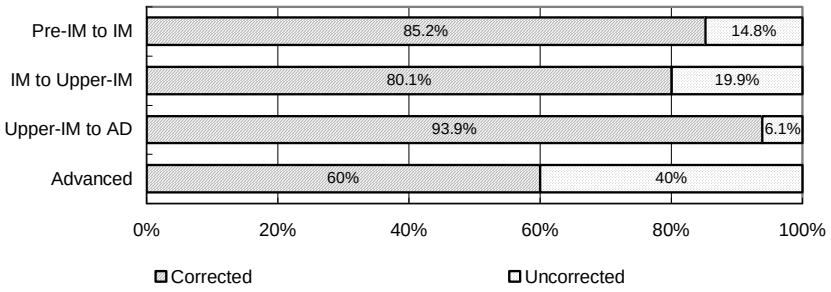
Some researchers (for example, see Bell, 1992; Esky, 1983; Major, 1988) state that a greater degree of linguistic accuracy in the target language is required for learners who

are pursuing a higher education in the target country. According to Ferris (1999), university faculty members feel that students' linguistic errors seriously affect their overall evaluation of written assignments. She also continues that improving self-editing skills is important for those learners. Tono and Kanatani (1996) made a more specific suggestion that even simple underlining might be sufficient if a learner's academic level is very high. Taking these assertions into account, one could assume that errors produced by the learners in the Academic English courses should be corrected more implicitly than those in the General English courses, and if so, the outcome of this study was inconsistent with what others suggest.

5.6.3 Other Findings

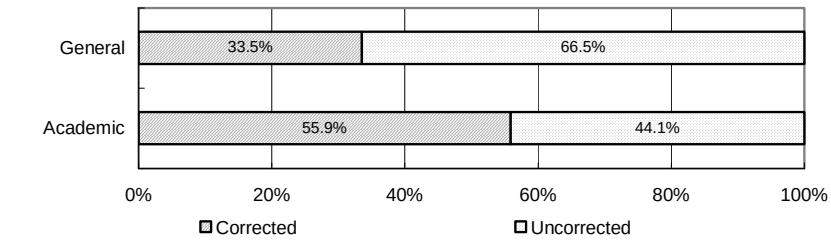
Although this research investigated the data on four major issues of error treatment practice obtained from each group, the previous section did not include the interpretation of results with regard to the types of learner errors the teachers corrected and how these errors were corrected. This was due to the fact that the comparison of the results concerning these issues resulted in drawing a very similar picture to the comparison of the overall trend. Consequently, it was decided not to attempt any further detailed analysis in order to avoid unnecessary repetition. Nevertheless, there were several minor, yet interesting findings that were contrary to the overall trend and thus should be mentioned here. First of all, the following Figure 5-3 describes the frequency of spelling error treatment obtained from the four different levels.

Figure 5-3 Frequency of Spelling Error Treatment: Level of Course



The results show that 85.2 per cent of errors produced in the Pre-intermediate to Intermediate level were corrected whereas 80.1 per cent of those in the Intermediate to Upper-intermediate level were corrected. Moreover, 93.9 per cent of spelling errors were corrected in the Upper-intermediate to Advanced level. In contrast to these high correction rates obtained from the three groups, the above figure clearly indicates that the correction rate of the Advanced level group was significantly low (60%). This result could be interpreted that the teacher of the university level ESL course might focus less on spelling errors. This could also suggest that the teachers in BUELI rarely ignored misspelled words. Secondly, Figure 5-4 below demonstrates the frequency of punctuation error treatment obtained from two types of courses: General and Academic.

Figure 5-4 Frequency of Punctuation Error Treatment: Type of Course



The result clearly shows that the correction rates between the two groups were significantly different. Whilst merely 33.5 per cent of punctuation errors were corrected in the General English courses, 55.9 per cent of those were corrected in its counterpart. Therefore, it could be assumed that the teachers of the Academic English courses paid much more attention to punctuation usage than those of the General English courses. This might be related to the types of writings examined in this research. In the General English course, the sample texts obtained were mainly free writings or informal letters. On the other hand, most of the samples collected from the Academic English courses were argumentative essays. As the latter required formal writing styles, the use of correct punctuation might be considered as a more important aspect of the language. In fact, the sample texts which contained all punctuation errors remaining uncorrected were mainly found in the General English courses.

According to the current results of various comparisons discussed above, there seems to be considerable gaps between the literature's suggestions and practice. However, due to the limitation of the current study, it is extremely difficult to interpret these results based merely on the data obtained from this particular study. The following are the reasons of this study's shortcomings. Firstly, since this study used authentic written texts, the numbers of each type of error corrected by the teachers in each group varied. If the teachers changed the correction methods depending on the types of errors, the numbers of corrected errors in each group would be extremely important to be taken into account. Since these numbers of errors might have influenced the outcome of the research, a simple comparison of the overall frequency and degree of explicitness of error treatment methods might be inadequate to make a definite conclusion.

Secondly, although the current research did not pursue the purposes of writing activities and how the learners used the teachers' correction after their papers were returned, these might also be very important factors to be considered. The reason behind this is, if the teachers intended to use the learners' papers for peer-correction or self-correction activities in a classroom, they would probably have pointed out the errors implicitly regardless of the learner level or the type of course. These factors might have influenced the current outcomes; thus, a firm conclusion could not be made unless the purpose and the content of the lessons were clarified. As a consequence of the above limitations, it is insufficient to claim any relationships between error treatment methods and course factors. Nevertheless, the results of this research draw a clear picture of how actual error treatment was practiced in the language classrooms.

In conclusion, the current research seems to fail in proving a clear relationship between the practice of error treatment and the variables: the level of the course and the type of the course. The results suggested that how the teachers dealt with learner errors was significantly different depending on the four levels. However, due to the limitation of the study, a relatively small number of the teachers were represented in each group. Therefore, it could be possible to consider that other factors, such as individual teachers' preferences or styles, or the types of writing activities might have influenced the outcome rather than the learners' levels. In order to obtain the more valid results, thus, further studies investigating the relationship between error treatment and these course factors in a larger scale is required.

5.7 Implications for ET in Teaching L2 Writing Skills

According to the results of the current study, it was found that the majority of ESL teachers at Bond University corrected learner errors at a considerably high rate. This suggests that despite the recent trend of the communicative approach to language teaching, the teachers' correction patterns followed the traditional method, which emphasises the importance of linguistic accuracy. Regrettably, this study could not reach a definite conclusion about whether the teachers believe error treatment is necessary or whether the learners have a strong desire for error treatment. However, in any case, what was obvious is that such time-consuming activity had been carried out on a daily basis, and it would be a heavy burden on the teachers. While immediate change of the situation might be impossible, there seem to be some solutions to improve the ways of dealing with numerous learner errors. In order to practice error treatment more efficiently and effectively in writing classes, the following section will consider several implications that arose from the current research.

To begin with, although teachers cannot turn a blind eye to learner errors, they could reduce their time spent on correcting errors by using less time-consuming treatment methods, such as underlining or circling for rule-governed errors. The implicit types of error treatment methods were used in half of the cases. The remaining half of the highlighted errors were actually rewritten by the teachers. Whilst the teachers provided explicit correction for wrong word choices or sentence construction errors, they also gave the correct forms for simple errors, such as wrong possessive errors or capitalisation errors. In addition, even misspelled words were rewritten by the teachers in some cases. As discussed previously, numerous recent studies in applied linguistics

suggests that learners' self-correction might be more effective than actual teacher correction. Thus, teachers should provide learners with as many opportunities as possible to discover solutions to their own errors (Brookes & Grundy, 1990; Hendrickson, 1984). In order to be able to choose pertinent types of error treatment methods according to the types of errors, it is necessary for language teachers to have precise knowledge of grammatical terms. While carrying out this study, it was brought to the researcher's attention that not only all teachers of ESL have completed formal courses in English grammar and terminology during their training.

Secondly, learner education is another important factor to be considered. No matter how often and how well error treatment has been provided by teachers, if learners do not utilise highlighted errors, time and effort spent on correction would be worthless. Thus, learners should be informed, or if they are advanced learners, they should have opportunities to discuss how they could use those errors in order to improve their writing skills. Researchers, such as Dickson (1995) and Ho (2003) state that it is important for learners to recognise the significance of their own weaknesses and start taking responsibility for them. Moreover, Allwright (1981) claims that if learners could be trained like that, a direct improvement in their language learning could be expected. As successful teaching/learning can only be achieved from the combined efforts of both teachers and learners, it is necessary to promote learner autonomy in such a way that the leaner is made fully aware of their errors and how to correct them.

Finally, schools or institutions should provide their language teachers time to have meetings or conferences to discuss how they have been dealing with various types of

written errors. Since the effect of error treatment is one of the issues that is of high concern for many language teachers (Pica, 1994, cited in Jensen, 1997), it would be beneficial to exchange each other's opinions or experience in order to revise, refine or change their ways to correct learner errors. The following is a suggestion for language teachers made by Allwright in 1992 which is extracted from Perpignan (2003, p.264).

> Teachers' theories may perhaps be developable on a highly individual and personal basis, but it does seem at least arguable that the process might be assisted if teachers have colleagues to discuss developing understandings with, and colleagues working together might surely be capable of developing a theoretical position of some generality, one not limited in relevance to just one teacher's experience.

At Bond University, many ESL learners study English for a long period in various courses, including the General English courses, the Academic English courses as well as university level ESL courses. In this particular teaching context, learners might be confused if all teachers' patterns of error treatment were different. In fact, the current research found that an abbreviation '*n*' was used for 'noun' by one teacher while the same code was used for 'number' by another teacher. Moreover, the same types of errors, such as verb tense errors were corrected with different abbreviations, '*wf*', '*vf*' or '*vt*'. In order to avoid giving an extra burden to learners which might occur due to such variance, constant information exchange among teachers to understand what has been done by other teachers would be significant. While teachers' personality and individuality in language teaching is important, a certain degree of generalisation in terms of written error treatment could be made as a basic guideline for the teachers.

To recapitulate the main points, until further studies find the clear effectiveness of error treatment, at this stage, increasing the use of less time-consuming treatment methods for unserious errors, educating learners to be able to carry out self-correction and also information exchange among teachers would be suggested to maximise the benefits of written error treatment.

5.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has interpreted and discussed the findings related to the research questions formulated in the current study and existing body of the literature on the subject. The chapter was presented in the following five sections: overall frequency of error treatment, types of learner errors and frequency of error treatment, overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods, types of learner errors and degree of explicitness of error treatment methods, and error treatment and course factors. Moreover, the possible implications for error treatment in teaching second language writing skills were also addressed. The main conclusions to be drawn from the current research will be presented in the subsequent chapter.

Conclusion

The purpose of the current research was to identify and analyse how the ESL teachers dealt with the learners' written errors in the context of Bond University on the Gold Coast. In addition, the study also aimed to highlight the relationship between the literature and practice in terms of error treatment of written work. In order to achieve these aims, in this study, sixty-six students' written texts corrected by nine teachers in various courses were collected and examined. All errors produced by the learners as well as error treatment provided by the teachers in each sample text were identified and classified according to their features. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data on learner errors and error treatment were analysed in a detailed manner, and following this, various comparisons were made to find out the relationship between those patterns of error treatment and the learner factors.

Initially, the current research investigated the overall frequency of error treatment. The results suggested that written error treatment was considerably frequently provided by the teachers in the ESL classrooms. The teachers consistently corrected the individual errors, which indicated that the teachers were highly concerned about sentence level accuracy. According to the analysis, these findings strikingly contradicted what current language teaching emphasises. Despite the recent theoretical suggestions for systematic error treatment, the adoption of these suggestions was not observed in the actual language classrooms. Undoubtedly, there must be certain reasons why the teachers cannot abandon such time-consuming work; however, further research concerned with

the teachers' perceptions of error treatment is necessary to understand this issue clearly.

Secondly, the frequency of error treatment in terms of eighteen types of learner errors was investigated in order to find out the types of learner errors the teachers focused on. The results revealed that rule-governed errors such as those in verb usage, word form and spelling obtained highly frequent correction whereas punctuation errors and article errors tended to be left uncorrected. Although several criteria have been suggested for language teachers to decide the priorities of error treatment, the current results could not prove any relationship between the types of errors frequently corrected and any of these criteria.

Thirdly, the current research also examined the overall degree of explicitness of error treatment methods to find out how the teachers dealt with learner errors in general. The results demonstrated that both explicit types and implicit types of correction methods were used by the teachers in a hybrid manner. The types of error treatment methods mainly used by the teachers were 'Actual correction' and 'Correction code'. In contrast, other types of implicit correction methods, 'Hint' and 'Location indicator' were not often provided by the teachers.

The final issue investigated in this research was how each type of error was corrected by the teachers. The results suggested that the degree of explicitness of error treatment was significantly different depending on the types of errors. The teachers tended to correct rule-governed errors, such as those in verb, singular/plurals, spelling and punctuation implicitly, and this concurred with what the literature suggests. In contrast to this, other

types of unquestionable errors, such as article errors or capitalisation errors were corrected explicitly. It should be mentioned here that the current research only indicated the average patterns of error treatment practice, and the individual teacher variance was not taken into account. Therefore, the results do not indicate that all teachers dealt with learner errors in the same way. Nevertheless, the current results suggest a firm relationship between the types of learner errors and the teachers' treatment methods, which could be used as one of the guidelines for improving teacher correction.

As summarised above, the current research has addressed several fascinating issues concerning written error treatment. While these findings may contribute to a new implication to second language acquisition, particularly, to the area of error treatment, there were some shortcomings which in hindsight could have been overcome. The following section will briefly deal with the limitation of the current research, and it will conclude the final chapter of this thesis.

To begin with, although most learner errors were classified into eighteen different categories objectively, the research in fact required further analysis of learner errors within each category. Therefore, it might have been appropriate to employ a research tool which could have classified the learner errors more precisely in order to carry out a more detailed quantifiable and qualitative data analysis. Secondly, due to the time restriction, the teachers' perceptions of error treatment were not investigated in this research. However, pursuing their perceptions through a survey or individual interviews with the teachers might have contributed to the understanding of their underlying pedagogical principles. All in all, the improvement in those methodological procedures

would be necessary for further studies in order to draw firmer conclusions with regard to the issues of ESL teachers' treatment of written errors.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Correction Codes

Appendix 2: Sample Texts

Appendix 3: Results of Classification

Appendix 4: Results of AWS Course

Appendix 1

Correction Codes

(Extracted from Oshima, 1991, pp. 260-261)

Meaning		Incorrect	Correct
P.	punctuation	*P.* *P.* I live, and go to school here *P.* Where do you work.	I live ad go to school here. Where do you work?
	word missing	 I working in a restaurant.	I am working in a restaurant.
Cap.	capitalization	*Cap.* *Cap.* *Cap.* It is located at main and baker street *Cap.* in the City.	It is located at Main and Baker Street in the city.
v.t.	verb tense	*v.t.* *v.t.* I never work as a casher until I get a job there.	I never worked as a casher until I got a job there.
agr.	subject-verb agreement	*agr.* The manager work hard. *agr.* There is five employees.	The manager works hard. There are five employees.
	make one word or sentence	 Every one works hard. We work together.  So we have become friends.	Everyone works hard. We work together, so we have become friends.
sp.	spelling	*sp.* The maneger is a woman.	The manager is a woman.
pl.	plural	*pl.* She treats her employees like slave.	She treats her employees like slaves

Correction Codes cont.

Meaning		Incorrect	Correct
X	unnecessary word	My boss she watches everyone all the time.	My boss watches everyone all the time.
w.f.	wrong word form	*w.f.* Her voice is irritated.	Her voice is irritating.
w.w.	wrong word	*w.w.* The food is delicious. Besides, the restaurant is always crowded.	The food is delicious. Therefore, the restaurant is always crowded.
ref.	pronoun reference error	*ref.* The restaurant's specialty is fish. They are always fresh. *ref.* The food is delicious. Therefore, it is always crowded.	The restaurant's specialty is fish. It is always fresh. The food is delicious. Therefore, the restaurant is always crowded.
⌐¬	wrong word order	Friday always is our busiest night.	Friday is always our busiest night.
RO	run-on	*RO* Lily was fired she is upset.	Lily was fired, so she is upset. Lily was fired; therefore, she is upset. Because Lily was fired, she is upset. Lily is upset because she was fired.
CS	comma splice	*CS* Lily was fired, she is upset.	
Frag	fragment	*Frag* She was fired. Becaue she was always late.	She was fired becaue she was always late.
T	add a transition	*T* She was also careless. She frequently spilled coffee in the table.	She was also careless. For example, she frequently spilled coffee in the table.

Correction Codes cont.

Meaning		Incorrect	Correct
s.	subject	*s.* ∧ Is open from 6:00 P.M. until the last customer leaves.	The restaurant is open from 6:00 P.M. until the last customer leaves.
v.	verb	*v.* The employees ∧ on time and work hard.	The employees are on time and work hard.
prep.	preposition	*prep.* We start serving dinner ∧ 6:00 P.M.	We start serving dinner at 6:00 P.M.
conj.	conjunction	*conj.* The garic shrimp, fried clams, ∧ boiled lobster are the most poplar dishes.	The garic shrimp, fried clams, and boiled lobster are the most poplar dishes.
art.	article	*art.* Diners expect ∧ glass of water when *art.* they first sit down at ∧ table.	Diners expec a glass of water when they first sit down at the table.

Appendix 2

Sample Texts

	Course	Topic of writing		Course	Topic of writing
1	GE3	My weekend with close friend	**17**	GE5	Dear friend ~my school and punishments
2	GE3	My weekend	**18**	GE5	Dear friend ~my school and punishments
3	GE3	My life in Australia	**19**	GE6	The wheel of fortune ~if I won a million dollars…
4	GE3	My life on the Gold Coast	**20**	GE6	The wheel of fortune ~if I won a million dollars…
5	GE3	My life in Brazil	**21**	GE6	The wheel of fortune ~if I won a million dollars…
6	GE3	My life in Japan	**22**	GE6	The wheel of fortune ~if I won a million dollars…
7	GE3	My life in Japan	**23**	GE6	The wheel of fortune ~if I won a million dollars…
8	GE3	My life in Japan	**24**	GE6	The wheel of fortune ~if I won a million dollars…
9	GE3	My life in Japan	**25**	GE6	The wheel of fortune ~if I won a million dollars…
10	GE3	My life in Korean Army	**26**	CFC	Dear Mr. Lawrence ~summer language course
11	GE4	Dear friend	**27**	CFC	Dear Mr. Lawrence ~summer language course
12	GE4	Dear friend	**28**	CFC	Dear Mr. Lawrence ~summer language course
13	GE5	Dear friend ~my school and punishments	**29**	CFC	Dear Jo
14	GE5	Dear friend ~my school and punishments	**30**	CFC	Dear Jo
15	GE5	Dear friend ~my school and punishments	**31**	CFC	Dear Jo
16	GE5	Dear friend ~my school and punishments	**32**	CFC	What a wonderful summer language course

Sample Texts cont.

	Course	Topic of writing		Course	Topic of writing
33	CFC	What a wonderful summer language course	**50**	AWS	Should the dingo be culled?
34	EAP1	Drug abuse by youth	**51**	AWS	Should the dingo be culled?
35	EAP1	Drug abuse by youth	**52**	AWS	Can television a good learning tool?
36	EAP1	Drug abuse by youth	**53**	AWS	Can television a good learning tool?
37	EAP1	Vegetarian diet	**54**	AWS	Can television a good learning tool?
38	EAP1	Vegetarian diet	**55**	AWS	Can television a good learning tool?
39	EAP1	Vegetarian diet	**56**	AWS	Can television a good learning tool?
40	EAP1	Vegetarian diet	**57**	AWS	Can television a good learning tool?
41	EAP3	Summary of ‘Working for the Rat’	**58**	WWPS	Can television a good learning tool?
42	EAP3	Summary of ‘Working for the Rat’	**59**	WWPS	Can television a good learning tool?
43	EAP3	Summary of ‘Working for the Rat’	**60**	WWPS	Can television a good learning tool?
44	EAP3	Summary of ‘Working for the Rat’	**61**	WWPS	Can television a good learning tool?
45	EAP3	Summary of ‘Working for the Rat’	**62**	WWPS	Can television a good learning tool?
46	EAP3	Summary of ‘Working for the Rat’	**63**	WWPS	Can television a good learning tool?
47	EAP3	Summary of ‘Working for the Rat’	**64**	WWPS	Can television a good learning tool?
48	EAP3	Summary of ‘Working for the Rat’	**65**	WWPS	Should the dingo be culled?
49	EAP3	Summary of ‘Working for the Rat’	**66**	WWPS	Should the dingo be culled?

Appendix 3

Results of Classification

GE3 (10 texts)							
	Corrected Error					Un	Grand
	AC	Hint	Code	LI	Total	CE	Total
Verb tense	1	1	13	0	15	1	16
Verb form	4	0	10	1	15	0	15
S/V agreement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Singular/plural	1	0	16	3	20	2	22
Possessive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S/V agreement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Article omission	5	0	9	26	40	0	40
Unnecessary use	10	0	0	0	10	3	13
Wrong article	0	0	2	0	2	1	3
Preposition	0	0	12	0	12	1	13
Word choice	4	2	25	1	32	5	37
Word form	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Word order	2	0	13	2	17	4	21
Incomplete s/s	6	0	4	22	32	5	37
Unnecessary	6	0	0	0	6	0	6
Spelling	4	1	16	0	21	1	22
Punctuation	5	0	15	0	20	19	39
Capitalisation	0	0	7	12	19	6	25
Other error	0	0	1	0	1	1	2
Total	48	4	144	67	263	49	312

GE4 (2 texts)							
	Corrected Error					Un	Grand
	AC	Hint	Code	LI	Total	CE	Total
Verb tense	3	1	3	0	7	2	9
Verb form	2	0	1	0	3	0	3
S/V agreement	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Singular/plural	0	0	3	0	3	1	4
Possessive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S/V agreement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Article omission	3	0	1	0	4	3	7
Unnecessary use	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Wrong article	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Preposition	1	0	1	0	2	1	3
Word choice	5	0	5	0	10	1	11
Word form	4	0	1	0	5	0	5
Word order	0	0	1	0	1	1	2
Incomplete s/s	5	0	9	0	14	4	18
Unnecessary	2	0	0	0	2	0	2
Spelling	4	0	5	0	9	3	12
Punctuation	5	0	7	0	12	5	17
Capitalisation	7	0	2	0	9	1	10
Other	3	0	1	0	4	1	5
Total	45	1	42	0	88	23	111

Note: AC = Actual Correction LI = Location Indicator UnCE = Uncorrected Error

Results of Classification cont.

GE5 (6 texts)							
	Corrected Error					Un	Grand
	AC	Hint	Code	LI	Total	CE	Total
Verb tense	4	0	6	3	13	0	13
Verb form	2	0	13	1	16	5	21
S/V agreement	0	0	3	0	3	0	3
Singular/plural	1	0	1	7	9	12	21
Possessive	1	0	0	0	1	1	2
S/V agreement	2	0	3	7	12	1	13
Article omission	2	0	0	5	7	11	18
Unnecessary use	0	0	1	1	2	2	4
Wrong article	4	0	0	0	4	3	7
Preposition	10	0	5	1	16	3	19
Word choice	17	0	10	8	35	7	42
Word form	3	0	2	6	11	1	12
Word order	1	0	8	0	9	1	10
Incomplete s/s	13	0	0	7	20	9	29
Unnecessary	7	0	0	0	7	2	9
Spelling	2	0	12	14	28	8	36
Punctuation	3	0	1	1	5	36	41
Capitalisation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other error	6	1	2	0	9	0	9
Total	78	1	67	61	207	102	309

GE6 (7 texts)							
	Corrected Error					Un	Grand
	AC	Hint	Code	LI	Total	CE	Total
Verb tense	8	0	0	0	8	1	9
Verb form	5	0	0	0	5	0	5
S/V agreement	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Singular/plural	10	0	0	0	10	1	11
Possessive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S/V agreement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Article omission	10	0	0	0	10	2	12
Unnecessary use	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wrong article	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
Preposition	5	0	0	0	5	1	6
Word choice	22	0	0	1	23	6	29
Word form	4	0	0	0	4	1	5
Word order	1	0	0	0	1	1	2
Incomplete s/s	9	0	0	0	9	11	20
Unnecessary	9	0	0	4	13	1	14
Spelling	9	0	0	0	9	0	9
Punctuation	4	0	0	0	0	29	29
Capitalisation	0	0	0	0	4	1	5
Other error	4	0	0	0	4	1	5
Total	101	0	0	5	106	58	164

Note: AC = Actual Correction LI = Location Indicator UnCE = Uncorrected Error

Results of Classification cont.

CFC (8 texts)							
	Corrected Error					Un	Grand
	AC	Hint	Code	LI	Total	CE	Total
Verb tense	4	4	0	0	8	3	11
Verb form	2	1	0	0	3	1	4
S/V agreement	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Singular/plural	7	1	0	0	8	5	13
Possessive	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
S/V agreement	2	3	0	0	5	0	5
Article omission	2	0	0	0	2	2	4
Unnecessary use	2	0	0	0	2	1	3
Wrong article	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Preposition	4	3	1	0	8	4	12
Word choice	10	0	2	0	12	4	16
Word form	10	0	0	0	10	4	14
Word order	0	0	5	0	5	2	7
Incomplete s/s	15	0	0	0	15	0	15
Unnecessary	6	3	0	1	10	1	11
Spelling	3	0	13	2	18	4	22
Punctuation	10	0	0	0	10	36	46
Capitalisation	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Other error	3	1	1	0	5	0	5
Total	81	16	22	3	122	72	194

EAP1 (7 texts)							
	Corrected Error					Un	Grand
	AC	Hint	Code	LI	Total	CE	Total
Verb tense	0	0	6	0	6	1	7
Verb form	5	0	11	1	17	0	17
S/V agreement	2	0	0	0	2	6	8
Singular/plural	15	0	6	0	21	16	37
Possessive	2	0	0	0	2	0	2
S/V agreement	2	0	1	0	3	0	3
Article omission	1	0	0	11	12	15	27
Unnecessary use	1	0	0	0	1	2	3
Wrong article	0	0	1	0	1	3	4
Preposition	2	0	2	0	4	3	7
Word choice	0	0	4	0	4	10	14
Word form	2	0	9	1	12	0	12
Word order	1	0	0	0	1	5	6
Incomplete s/s	1	4	8	13	26	15	41
Unnecessary	5	0	1	0	6	6	12
Spelling	2	0	12	0	14	3	17
Punctuation	1	0	14	0	15	16	31
Capitalisation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other error	0	0	2	2	4	6	10
Total	42	4	77	28	151	107	258

Note: AC = Actual Correction LI = Location Indicator UnCE = Uncorrected Error

Results of Classification cont.

EAP3 (9 texts)							
	Corrected Error					Un	Grand
	AC	Hint	Code	LI	Total	CE	Total
Verb tense	0	0	20	2	22	0	22
Verb form	0	0	22	0	22	3	25
S/V agreement	0	0	2	0	2	1	3
Singular/plural	3	1	30	4	38	7	45
Possessive	4	0	0	1	5	0	5
S/V agreement	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Article omission	0	0	0	22	22	7	29
Unnecessary use	23	0	1	0	24	4	28
Wrong article	0	0	5	0	5	0	5
Preposition	1	0	3	1	5	0	5
Word choice	7	1	50	1	59	5	64
Word form	0	0	6	0	6	0	6
Word order	0	0	15	0	15	2	17
Incomplete s/s	0	1	2	10	13	6	19
Unnecessary	35	0	15	0	50	0	50
Spelling	2	0	23	0	25	0	25
Punctuation	2	0	10	8	20	18	38
Capitalisation	0	0	0	0	0	8	0
Other error	0	0	22	1	23	0	23
Total	77	3	227	50	357	53	410

WWPS (9 texts)							
	Corrected Error					Un	Grand
	AC	Hint	Code	LI	Total	CE	Total
Verb tense	7	0	0	0	7	0	7
Verb form	5	0	0	0	5	0	5
S/V agreement	5	0	0	0	5	0	5
Singular/plural	23	0	2	0	25	6	31
Possessive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S/V agreement	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Article omission	5	0	0	0	5	3	8
Unnecessary use	15	0	0	0	15	3	18
Wrong article	11	0	0	0	11	0	11
Preposition	11	0	2	0	13	0	13
Word choice	26	1	2	0	29	1	30
Word form	6	0	0	0	6	0	6
Word order	4	0	1	0	5	4	9
Incomplete s/s	10	0	0	0	10	3	13
Unnecessary	12	0	0	0	12	1	13
Spelling	3	0	0	0	3	2	5
Punctuation	18	0	0	6	24	12	36
Capitalisation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other error	0	0	1	20	21	2	23
Total	162	1	8	26	197	37	234

Note: AC = Actual Correction LI = Location Indicator UnCE = Uncorrected Error

Appendix 4

Results of AWS Course

No. of errors (8 texts)							
	Corrected Error					Un	Grand
	AC	Hint	Code	LI	Total	CE	Total
Verb tense	2	0	0	0	2	9	11
Verb form	0	0	0	2	2	17	19
S/V agreement	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Singular/plural	0	0	0	0	0	20	20
Possessive	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
S/V agreement	0	0	0	1	1	4	5
Article omission	0	0	0	2	2	10	12
Unnecessary use	0	0	0	0	0	12	12
Wrong article	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Preposition	0	0	0	2	2	9	11
Word choice	2	2	0	3	7	15	22
Word form	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Word order	0	0	1	0	1	8	9
Incomplete s/s	1	4	0	4	9	9	18
Unnecessary	1	1	0	0	2	8	10
Spelling	1	0	0	7	8	35	43
Punctuation	0	0	0	1	1	29	30
Capitalisation	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Other error	1	0	0	3	4	6	10
Total	8	7	1	25	41	201	242

Percentages							
	Corrected Error					Un	Grand
	AC	Hint	Code	LI	Total	CE	Total
Verb tense	18.2%	0%	0%	0%	18.2%	81.8%	
Verb form	0%	0%	0%	10.5	10.5%	89.5%	
S/V agreement	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100.0%	
Singular/plural	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100.0%	
Possessive	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100.0%	
S/V agreement	0%	0%	0%	20.0%	20.0%	80.0%	
Article omission	0%	0%	0%	16.7%	16.7%	83.3%	
Unnecessary use	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100.0%	
Wrong article	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100.0%	
Preposition	0%	0%	0%	18.2%	18.2%	81.8%	
Word choice	0%	0%	0%	13.6%	31.8%	68.210	
Word form	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100.0%	
Word order	0%	0%	11.1%	0%	11.1%	88.9%	
Incomplete s/s	5.6%	22.2%	0%	22.2%	50.0%	50.0%	
Unnecessary	10.0%	10.0%	0%	0%	20.0%	80.0%	
Spelling	2.3%	0%	0%	16.3%	18.6%	81.4%	
Punctuation	0%	0%	0%	3.3%	3.3%	96.7%	
Capitalisation	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100.0%	
Other error	10.0%	0%	0%	30.0%	40.0%	60.0%	
Total	3.3%	2.9%	0.4%	10.3%	16.9%	83.1%	